PATTERNS OF POWER · THE COMPLETE STATEMENT

What Force Cannot Do

The Complete Statement — Why Armed Men Settle and What They Settle On, Who Reads the Ground and How Far It Reaches, Why the Floor Beneath Them Is Itself a Settlement, How the Whole Thing Fails, and How Much of It the Record Permits Us to Know

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with Claude (Anthropic) · 2026

held as tested, not revealed

Preface: what this paper is

The collaboration, the consolidation, and the promise that it stands alone.

This paper belongs to the Patterns of Power project and is a collaboration. The questions, the direction, the pattern-recognition and the final judgement are the author's; the synthesis, the drafting and the scholarly retrieval were done with Claude, Anthropic's model, with every load-bearing claim checked against a source before anything was built on it. The method is declared because it is a new way of making knowledge and ought to be visible rather than concealed. Where the model disagreed with the author it said so, and several of the findings below exist because it did.

The project asks one question of particular historical orders: **how does a distribution of holdings taken by force become an arrangement that armed men will defend rather than contest?** How does a warlord's camp become a country? It has now asked that question of some three dozen cases — dynasties, republics, empires, caliphates, city-state systems, commercial oligarchies, headless orders and colonial administrations — and a set of theoretical papers has accumulated alongside the case studies.

This paper is the consolidation. It is not a summary of the others and it does not assume them. It is a single continuous statement of the whole apparatus as it now stands, written from the beginning, with every mechanism built up in order so that each rests on the one before it. Where the argument has changed under pressure from evidence, the changed version is what appears here, and the change is noted where it matters.

It carries, among other things, several results that are recent enough not to have appeared in any single previous statement: that the class of men who read a society's source of legitimacy do **two separable jobs** with opposite exposure to capture; that where their qualification is issued predicts three different things at once and also sets the **radius** within which any settlement can reach; that the **floor of force is not the bedrock of the system but a second settlement nested inside the first**, with its own anchor and its own way of coming apart; that the succession problem has a third class of solution nobody in this project had catalogued; that a conqueror's options are set by the settlement he finds rather than by his intentions, and reduce to **five ways of seating a man**, one of which escapes the problem entirely; and that the historical

record's bias is not random with respect to any of this but runs systematically **against the orders that resisted conquest best**.

The paper stands alone. No prior reading is assumed — not of this project, not of anthropology, cognitive science, economics or the history of any of the regions it touches, and not of any scholar named. Every borrowed idea is built from scratch in plain words before it is put to work. Where a technical term is unavoidable it is defined at first use and used consistently. Every scholar cited is explained: what they argued, in what year, in ordinary language, before their argument is used for anything. A reader who has never encountered any of this should be able to follow the whole of it and disagree with it intelligently, which is the only kind of agreement worth having.

And one discipline governs throughout. The orders examined here were built on conquest, slavery, forced labour, human sacrifice, the taking of children, and the binding of populations to land they were forbidden to leave. To explain the machinery by which such arrangements acquired their foundations is not to soften them, and the elegance of a mechanism is never a defence of what the mechanism did. This project states that obligation in the phrase *legibility is not pardon*, and discharges it in Part XVII at length rather than in a clause.

The question

What happens at the end of a war that nobody won.

Picture the ordinary condition. A territory, a scatter of armed houses, each holding what it can hold, each capable of taking from the others and each vulnerable to being taken from. Every one of them would prefer this to stop. It is exhausting and unprofitable and their sons will inherit it.

It does not stop. And the reason it does not stop is not that anybody wants it to continue.

Then, sometimes — not usually, but often enough that we have records of it — it does stop. Not because one party wins outright, or not only for that reason, and not because anyone becomes less greedy. The same men, holding roughly the same things, begin behaving as though the holdings were *theirs* rather than merely held; begin treating an attack on a neighbour as an attack on themselves; begin passing what they have to sons who did not fight for it. A camp becomes a country.

Two questions come out of that, and this paper is a long answer to both.

The first is *what changed*. Nothing physical. The same men, the same weapons, the same fields. Something changed in what each of them expected the others to do, and this paper's argument is that the change has a specific structure, that it requires a particular kind of object to hang on, and that the object cannot be manufactured by the people who need it.

The second question is why the answer is so consistent. Orders separated by oceans, millennia and every possible difference of technology and belief converge on architectures that are recognisably the same — a source of rightfulness nobody in the game could have made, a class of men who read it, a settlement of holdings drawn from it, and an armed floor beneath. That recurrence needs an explanation which is neither cultural borrowing (the cases had no contact) nor a law of history (the exceptions are numerous and instructive), and the last part of this paper offers one.

Before either, a warning about the evidence, which is the paper's own hardest problem and is stated in full in Part XIII: **everything above is drawn from orders that lasted long enough to be recorded.** That is a filtered sample and the filter is not random with respect to the subject.

Part I — Possession, ownership, and the coordination failure

Why armed men who all want peace cannot have it.

Everything below rests on a distinction that ordinary speech collapses, and it has to be separated and kept separated, because nearly every confusion in this subject comes from letting the two words drift back together.

The distinction

Possession is what force holds now. Nobody currently able to take a thing is taking it. Possession is entirely present-tense, and it expires exactly when the capacity sustaining it expires — which means at illness, at absence, at the moment attention turns elsewhere, and completely at death.

Ownership is a claim about the future and about other people. To own a field is to claim that it will be mine tomorrow while I sleep, mine next spring while I am away at war, mine when I am not standing on it, and — the decisive part — that when I die you will treat my son as its owner. Ownership is not a relation between a person and a thing at all. **It is a structure of expectations about how other people will behave toward a thing across time, including across my absence and my death.**

Force is sovereign over the first and completely impotent over the second. A sword takes a field today. It cannot promise the field next spring, and it certainly cannot promise that a boy will hold it. So:

> ***The part of a holding that force cannot reach is exactly the part that distinguishes ownership from possession, and it therefore has to be manufactured out of something that is not force.***

Read "a holding" broadly. The thing whose persistence must be manufactured need not be property in land — it can be an office, a rank, a right to labour, a standing, a claim to a title. The Inca ran an empire of millions with almost no private property in land; the mass owed labour rather than rent and owned nothing to hold title to, and the analysis applies in full, because what needed securing was the future tense of a

claim. Several cases in this paper concern peoples with very little fixed property and a great deal to settle.

Why wanting peace is not enough

The political scientist James Fearon published an argument in 1995 about why rational parties fight wars that both would have preferred to avoid. One of his answers is now called the **commitment problem**, and it is this: nobody can bind their future self. A bargain struck at today's balance of strength will be renegotiated at tomorrow's. If I expect to be weaker next year, an agreement made this year is a promise my counterpart has no reason to keep. Under those conditions, striking first is frequently the correct move even for a party who sincerely wants peace.

That is the engine, and no amount of goodwill touches it. But it is not yet the whole mechanism, because it describes a two-party problem and the situation is not a two-party problem.

The bystanders decide everything

Take the decision that actually governs. One armed man considers seizing his neighbour's holding. Strip conscience out entirely; it is not doing the work here. His real calculation is a **forecast about third parties** — the other houses who will watch. If they stand aside, the fight is one against one and he probably wins. If some join him, better. If they all fall on him, he is destroyed.

So look at the bystanders' problem, which is the harder one and which decides the outcome. Each bystander asks: *is this my quarrel?*

Absent some common ground of title, the honest answer is no. My neighbour's holding is his affair. Spending my men on his defence buys me casualties and an enemy — and worse, if I intervene and the others do not, I have made myself the next target while they husbanded their strength. So every bystander waits. And each knows the others are reasoning identically, and that shared expectation of inaction is precisely what makes the original grab safe.

Which gives the finding that reorganises everything that follows:

> ***Warlordism is not a moral failure or a failure of restraint. It is a coordination failure among the men who might have punished the aggressor.*** *Predation is safe because punishment is unreliable, and punishment is unreliable because no bystander can count on the others.*

That reframing matters because it tells you what a solution must do. It does not need to make anyone good. It does not need to persuade the aggressor of anything. **It needs to change what the bystanders can predict about each other**, and it needs to do so in a way each of them knows the others have also received.

Part II — The anchor

One shared source, four properties, and the one thing it cannot be.

Now suppose every house's holding derives its rightfulness from the same source.

The bystander's arithmetic inverts. Letting this seizure stand establishes that holdings may be taken — which is a fact about *his* holding too. Intervention becomes self-defence at one remove. And, decisively, he can predict that the others are computing the same thing, so acting does not expose him: he is joining a coalition that forms whether or not he leads it.

Call that shared source the **anchor**.

Its work is done on the bystanders' expectations. It reaches the aggressor only as a forecast he cannot beat. **He abstains not because he believes but because he can count.** That is worth holding onto, because it is the point at which most accounts of legitimacy go wrong: the mechanism does not require anybody to be persuaded of anything. It requires them to be able to predict one another.

The scholarship this rests on

Two arguments from political science are doing structural work here and both should be stated plainly.

The economist **Barry Weingast** published a paper in 1997 on what he called the political foundations of democracy and the rule of law. His model concerns a sovereign and his subjects. A ruler who wishes to transgress rights needs only *one* group's acquiescence — so subjects who are divided about what counts as a violation are picked off one at a time, and subjects who share a standard are not. A constitution, in his account, works less by restraining the ruler directly than by **giving everyone the same signal about when to act**, so that resistance becomes coordinated rather than sporadic.

This project takes Weingast's structure and applies it **horizontally** — among armed peers rather than between a ruler and his subjects. The mechanism is his; the horizontal application is the project's extension and is flagged as such throughout.

The political scientist **Michael Chwe** published a book in 2001 on ritual and coordination. His central point is that coordination requires more than everyone knowing a thing. It requires everyone to know that everyone knows it, and to know

that, upward without limit — a condition called **common knowledge**. And his observation is that public ceremony is a machine for producing it: a ritual works not because it transmits a message to each person but because it lets each person **see everyone else receiving it**.

That explains something otherwise puzzling about the apparatus of legitimacy — why it is so relentlessly public, repetitive, visible and content-light. A coronation before assembled magnates is not trying to convince the magnates. It is letting each of them watch the others watch. Which is why the *content* of such ceremonies matters far less than their visibility, and why an order will spend enormous sums on a procession that teaches nobody anything.

The one condition

From the mechanism follows the requirement that organises this entire paper.

> ***A party competing for the spoils cannot be the author of who gets them.***

A title granted by a competitor is not a title. It is a forecast about that competitor's health, and every holder of such a title knows it and behaves accordingly.

And the danger is not principally that a strong man will **break** the rule. Breaking is legible; the coalition is trained to punish it; the punishment is foreseeable enough to deter. The danger is that he will **change** it — because rule-change does not trigger the coalition at all. The bystander mechanism is keyed to violations of the ground and has nothing whatever to say about a man who alters the ground lawfully. This distinction will do a great deal of work later, because several orders in the record were dismantled from inside by men who never once broke a rule.

So the source must be beyond revision by the men competing. Placing it outside the human world altogether is the surest way, and it is a means rather than the thing itself. The requirement is weaker and covers more cases:

> ***An anchor must be unforgeable by the current claimants.***

Timur could conquer from Delhi to Ankara and could not make himself a descendant of Genghis Khan — so he married a Chinggisid princess, took the title of royal son-in-law, and ruled through puppet khans he could have dispensed with in an afternoon. No Ethiopian noble could make himself a Solomonid. Descent sits squarely inside the human world and is still unrevisable, because it is the one thing conquest cannot confer.

Nothing on this list requires a god. Imperial China reached the same condition with an impersonal Heaven, a dead sage's closed canon and a cosmology of correspondences. Venice reached it with a randomised electoral procedure of such deliberate complexity that no faction could predict its outcome. Ethiopia reached it with a bloodline. **The supernatural was never the variable. Unforgeability was.**

The four properties

A working anchor needs four things, and cases fail on each of them.

Determinate. It must yield exactly one answer to *who rightfully holds this* and one to *who comes next*. A ground that yields two answers is not a ground; it is a casus belli with citations. Most historical anchors are determinate about the first and weak on the second, and Part IX is largely about what that costs.

Unrevisable by any competitor. As above.

Common knowledge. Not merely that everyone knows it, but that everyone knows the others know it, and knows they know he knows. This is the property that ceremony manufactures.

Attached to the office rather than the man. An anchor that lives in a particular person dies at a funeral, among armed heirs, which is the worst possible moment.

The floor

An anchor says who is right. It does not enforce itself.

The **floor** is the coercive capacity that makes a verdict land on the man who defies it. An anchor without a floor produces verdicts that fall still-born. A floor without an anchor produces verdicts that expire with the army. Score the two separately in every case, because an intact anchor above a dissolved floor is inert, and a floor with nothing above it is a warlord with good logistics.

Most orders run a **centralised** floor. A few run a **distributed** one, in which the bystander coalition does the enforcing itself rather than delegating it to a state — and a distributed floor has a hidden condition that a centralised one lacks, since its entire enforcing capacity *is* the ability of the many to outweigh the one. It works under rough equality and fails when private power concentrates. Where that equality comes from is a question this project could not answer for a long time; Part IX now can.

Part VIII returns to the floor and argues that this description of it, which the project used for years, was wrong in an important way.

The two audiences

Finally: a legitimating story addresses two audiences and they are not running the same program.

For the **armed and administrative few**, binding requires only the expectation that the others will act on it. A baron who privately regards the coronation as theatre still cannot profit from attacking his neighbour, provided he expects the other barons to treat that attack as an assault on their own titles. His scepticism is irrelevant, because his behaviour tracks his forecast of them rather than his estimate of the doctrine's truth. And they may all be equally sceptical and nothing changes, so long as none can be sure the others share it.

For the **mass**, the traditional claim in this project has been that genuine belief is what makes rule cheap — since a peasant who privately regards the arrangement as robbery pays only when a soldier is near, and that is the expensive arrangement the whole apparatus exists to avoid.

That second claim needs an amendment which this paper records, because a case forced it. The Ottoman order governed Christian and Jewish majorities for centuries with no expectation that they would hold the ruling creed, and it ran cheaply. It did so by **leasing** belief it had not manufactured — leaving the Orthodox, Armenian and Jewish hierarchies alive, self-governing, taxing and judging their own, in exchange for revenue and quiet. Which yields:

> *The ruler's anchor must author title among the armed. The mass requires an anchor — **not necessarily his**. Where a subject population arrives with one already, a ruler may lease it, and the lease is cheaper than conversion.*

And leasing has a limit that identifies where such an empire's violence will fall. A lease requires something leasable: a determinate transmitted law, a standing class of interpreters, and an identity separable enough to be its own container. A population that constitutes a **fork within the ruler's own creed** — the same anchor read differently — cannot be granted one, because granting it a self-governing hierarchy would concede that the ruling ground yields two answers. Which predicts, counter-intuitively, that in a leasing empire **coercive violence varies inversely with doctrinal distance from the ruling creed**: the furthest are safest and the nearest are in the most danger. That prediction is entered formally in Part XV.

Part III — Why there is always an interpreter

A vulnerability in the mind, and the position it builds in every complex society.

An anchor does not read itself. Somebody says what it requires — which lineage descends from whom, which appointment is valid, which day the ceremony falls, which grant is lawful, which prohibition applies to whom. That class of people exists in every case this project has examined, and it exists for structural reasons rather than cultural ones. Two arguments, run from opposite directions, converge on the same position.

The mind that has to trust

Start with something small enough to see whole. In a devout Catholic household a priest arrives, and what he says about God and the sacraments and how a life should be lived is received as the word of the Church. Ask the family what they know about this particular man — his learning, his theology, his private conduct, whether his judgement is sound — and the answer is almost always nothing. They have not examined him and it would not occur to them to try. He wears the collar. Send a different priest tomorrow, a complete stranger, and the same deference attaches instantly and undiminished, because it was never about the first man.

The lazy reading is that people are credulous. The lazy reading is wrong, and getting it right is the whole point.

Humans are what the cultural-evolution literature associated with the anthropologist **Joseph Henrich** calls **obligate social learners**. Our species does not succeed by individual cleverness; almost nothing any person knows was worked out by that person. We survive by acquiring, from other people, an enormous body of technique and knowledge we could not reconstruct and mostly cannot check — which plants are poisonous, how to build a boat that floats, how to detoxify a bitter root through a fourteen-stage process no individual could have derived from first principles. The capacity to take things on trust is not a bug bolted onto an otherwise rational animal. **It is the adaptation that made us dominant**, which is exactly why it cannot be removed.

But we are not blank credulity either, and the correction matters. The cognitive scientists **Dan Sperber** and **Hugo Mercier**, in work from 2010 onward, describe what they call **open vigilance**: people accept information *conditionally*, running a set of filters more or less automatically. Does the source have relevant **competence**? Does it have **benevolence** — an interest in my going right rather than wrong? Is there **consensus**, do others accept it? Is it **coherent** with what I already hold? Has the source made a **costly commitment**, staked something on it that a liar would not stake?

Those are decent filters. In a small world they are close to unimprovable, because in a band of a hundred and fifty people the man who claims competence is the man whose competence you have watched for thirty years, and the man who claims benevolence is your cousin.

The filters are the attack surface. They read cues, and at civilisational scale the cue and the thing it signals come apart. Nobody can verify the competence of a bishop, a physician, a central banker or a general. What can be verified is that a man holds the **marks** — the collar, the credential, the office, the endorsement of others who hold marks. So the cues become forgeable, and a governing class discovers, by trial and error across generations rather than by conspiracy, how to manufacture them.

One consequence deserves to be stated early because it will matter repeatedly: **seeing through is not getting out.** Any particular framework is revisable and plenty of people revise it. But the architecture is the division of cognitive labour, and nobody knows more than a sliver of anything first-hand. To reject one authority is necessarily to trust another. The permanence lies in the dependence, not in any rigidity of mind, and the only liberty available is not the end of dependence but its **contestability** — whether the authorities one must trust are plural, checkable, revisable and in competition.

The position specialisation builds

Now the same fact from outside the head.

Adam Smith opened *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776 with the division of labour — the pin factory, where ten men each performing one operation produce thousands of times what ten men each making whole pins could manage. That is the foundation of material civilisation. Smith also, much later in the same book, recorded a darker second thought that is usually left out of the summary: the man whose whole life is spent on a few simple operations has no occasion to exert his understanding, and becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become. **Specialisation of doing is also specialisation of knowing**, and Smith saw both halves.

Friedrich Hayek pushed it further in 1945, arguing that the knowledge a society runs on exists nowhere in complete form — it is dispersed in fragments among millions of people, and no single mind holds it or could. He meant an argument about economic planning. Treated as a permanent cognitive condition rather than a market curiosity, it says something larger: in any society past a certain complexity, **every person must delegate most of his knowing to sources he cannot check.**

Put Smith and Hayek together and a *position* comes into existence whether or not anyone intends it. Between the many and the knowledge they cannot reach for themselves there is a chokepoint, and somebody occupies it. Priests, scribes, jurists, scholars, calendar specialists, editors, credentialed experts, ranking algorithms: the occupants change and the seat does not.

This project calls the position the **seam**, and makes three claims about it.

First, it controls **two valves**: the inflow that fills a head with the authorised account, and the outflow that starves it of the rival — formation and suppression, the catechism and the censor.

Second, it has been acknowledged from the inside for as long as there have been occupants. Plato's noble lie is a description of the seat written by a man sitting in it. The journalist **Walter Lippmann**, in *Public Opinion* (1922), observed that the official is inevitably in some degree a censor, and made the larger point that what people act on is not the world but the **pictures in their heads**, assembled from reports they cannot verify — so whoever shapes the reports shapes the acting.

Third, and this will cause productive trouble in Part V: **a position carrying structural power of that kind is, eventually, always captured.** Not by conspiracy — by gradient. It is simply worth more to control than to leave alone, and over a long enough period somebody with resources acts on that.

And the seam does not go away. Every new information technology is greeted as its abolition and merely relocates it: scribe to priest to printer to editor to algorithm. **The seam is made of finitude, and no technology repeals finitude.** A flood of information does not dissolve the chokepoint; it builds a new one, because when there is more than anyone can read, the filter becomes the power.

The joint

Put the two together and the architecture states itself.

The seam is the position. The interpreter class is the occupant. The anchor is the content. And open vigilance is why any of it holds.

One further consequence falls out of the joint, and it accounts for something this project has recorded many times without explaining. **Age is the strongest possible**

signal against every vigilance criterion at once. An old cosmology passes on competence, because it has been sufficient for generations. It passes on consensus, because everyone around you holds it. It passes on coherence, because everything else you know was built inside it. And it passes on costly commitment, because people have died for it within living memory. A new claim fails all four simultaneously.

There is therefore no way to make a new ground pass except by asserting that it is not new — which is why every new ground in the record is announced as a **recovery**. Hilkiah's scroll, discovered in the Temple during renovations in 622 BCE at a moment of political need, containing a law nobody had been keeping. Marx's *discovered* law of historical development. The nationalist awakening of a people that had supposedly been there all along and merely asleep. Three instances, twenty-five centuries apart, with no transmission between them, reaching for the identical move.

That is not rhetoric. It is the filter operating, and Part IV is about what it implies for where anchors come from.

Part IV — Where the ground comes from

A property that cannot be added, material made for something else, and three conditions.

The property cannot be conferred

The requirement from Part II was that the source of title be unforgeable by the men currently competing. Notice what kind of requirement that is. It is not a *feature* of an object — not a design specification a well-resourced builder could meet. **It is a fact about the object's history.**

A ruler with unlimited means can build the temple, endow the priesthood, commission the scripture, train the interpreters, compose the liturgy and stage the coronation. What he cannot do is make it true that he did not do those things. And every witness to the building retains, permanently, the one observation that destroys the instrument: *I watched him make it.* The property he needs is the absence of exactly the act he is performing, which is why the harder he works the worse his position becomes.

The record confirms this from both directions and the second direction is the surprising one.

Every durable order in this collection ran on a source that predated it. Ethiopian emperors claimed descent from a biblical lineage established a thousand years before their dynasty existed. Seljuk sultans — Turkish warlords who had taken Persia and Iraq by force in the eleventh century — sought investiture from a caliphal office three centuries older than their arrival and militarily helpless. William of Normandy, having won England on a battlefield, took his crown from a church older than his duchy. The Mamluks, slave soldiers who seized Egypt in 1250, sent men into the desert to find a survivor of the massacre of the Baghdad caliphs hiding among Bedouin, installed him in Cairo, and maintained that office for two hundred and fifty-six years.

And the manufacturers failed. Diocletian reorganised the Roman state more thoroughly than anyone since Augustus, sacralised his own person, and founded nothing that outlived his abdication. Ahmad Shah Durrani built an Afghan empire on a tribal assembly that any chief could convene, which is exactly why it bound nobody after him. Henry VIII made himself Supreme Head of the Church in England and his own daughter quietly demoted the title to Supreme Governor.

The sharpest instance is **Akbar**, the Mughal emperor, who had every advantage a manufacturer could want — no rival authority in his territory, a large army, a functioning bureaucracy, a court theologian supplying a doctrine of divine light and a poet to versify it. His decisive document of 1579 turns out, on inspection, not to be a decree issued by the emperor at all. A decree would have been a *farmān*. What survives is a *maḥẓar* — an **attestation**, in which other men declare that his judgement binds them. Given the choice between issuing an order and getting others to sign a statement, the most powerful man in South Asia chose the second, because the first would have carried his own signature and been worth exactly his own strength.

The failure is legible in the grammar of the document.

Exaptation: the material was made for something else

If the property cannot be conferred, the material has to come from outside the contest, and the general route is temporal: from before the players existed.

Biology has a precise term. In 1982 the palaeontologists **Stephen Jay Gould** and **Elisabeth Vrba** proposed **exaptation** for a feature that arises under one set of pressures and is later co-opted for a use it did not evolve to serve. The standard illustration is feathers. Feathers long predate flying birds and appear to have served insulation and display; flight came along afterwards and made use of what was lying around. **Flight did not cause feathers. Flight found them.**

The parallel is exact and it is the framework's central image. Asking who made the first source of political legitimacy is malformed in the same way as asking what the first flight feather evolved *for*. Nobody made it. Cosmologies existed, doing other things — explaining the flood, fixing the calendar, ordering marriage, burying the dead, settling quarrels between neighbours — and the commitment problem found them.

From which follows the finding most likely to be contested, and which I think is right: **sincerity is the manufacturing process.** A body of belief becomes authorless because it accretes across generations out of genuine attempts to understand and order the world, revised by nobody in particular, attributed to no one. That is the only known way to produce a thing with no author, and it **cannot be run on purpose**, because running it on purpose is precisely what disqualifies the output.

And therefore: **cynicism is parasitic on prior sincerity.** An instrumental elite can capture an anchor, staff it, fund it, defend it and live off it for centuries — this project says so repeatedly and it stands. What such an elite cannot do is *make* one, because making one requires not being about power. Every cynical order draws down a stock of authorlessness produced generations earlier by people who meant it.

Three conditions

Raw authorless material is necessary and not sufficient. Three further conditions have to hold, and the absence of each does diagnostic work later.

Specialisation opens the gap. Surplus permits some people to stop farming, and among the first non-farmers are those who fight and those who interpret. The separation of those two occupations is what makes an anchor possible, because the anchor lives between them and belongs to neither. Where the man who commands is also the man who reads the will of heaven, there is no gap for an anchor to live in, and the consequences are severe.

Conditional trust makes age the evidence. This is Part III's vigilance argument doing origin work: an old cosmology passes every filter automatically and a new one fails nearly all of them, so the only material that can pass is material that has been lying around long enough for nobody to remember its arrival.

Circumscription closes the exit. In 1970 the anthropologist **Robert Carneiro** published a theory of state origins turning on a simple observation. Warfare is universal; states are not. What distinguishes the places where war produced states is whether the losers could **leave**. In the narrow Peruvian coastal valleys, hemmed by desert, mountain and sea, a defeated village had nowhere to go and was absorbed and subordinated rather than dispersed, and hierarchy became possible. In the Amazon basin, where beaten groups moved into effectively unlimited forest, the same warfare produced no states for millennia.

Carneiro has been criticised since and fairly — several primary states fit the model awkwardly, and bounded fertile land is also the land most worth fighting over and most easily taxed, so the correlation admits other causal stories. But the core survives: **where the defeated can walk away there is nothing to settle, because dispersal is cheaper than subordination for everybody.**

To which this project adds an extension that is the author's rather than Carneiro's and which Part XII is largely about: **legal circumscription.** Where geography supplies no walls, states build them in statute.

Where the regress stops

The obvious objection is that this defers rather than explains. If every anchor is inherited from an earlier one, either there was a first that somebody made — in which case anchors can be made — or the chain runs back forever, which is absurd.

The exaptation frame answers it. **The chain does not run back through anchors. It terminates in something that is not one.** There was never a first anchor; there was

a first *repurposing*. What lies at the base is not a proto-anchor but a cosmology that authorised no distribution of holdings and would not have been recognised by its makers as having anything to do with title. It needed no political ancestor because it was not doing political work.

Two consequences. The first is that "where do anchors come from" is not a question about political invention at all, but about what a society happens to have accumulated, for other reasons, by the time it acquires a coordination problem it cannot solve. **The real determinants of an order's foundations are largely pre-political.**

The second is uncomfortable. If the raw material is produced only by processes nobody is running, it cannot be produced to order — including now. Any project of deliberately constructing a shared source of title *between* states, for a world with no cosmology in common, is attempting the thing the record contains no clear instance of. That is not a proof of impossibility. It is a statement about the odds, and about where the difficulty actually lies.

The strongest objection

One large body of evidence runs against all of this and should be stated at full strength rather than managed.

Modern nationalism looks very much like an anchor built from nothing, by identifiable people, on datable occasions, within living memory of its own construction — and it became load-bearing enough that tens of millions died for it.

Two books of 1983 made the case. The historian **Eric Hobsbawm** and the anthropologist **Terence Ranger** edited *The Invention of Tradition*, showing that a striking number of practices presented as immemorial were recent and deliberate: national ceremonies, ancient-looking uniforms, folk costume, royal pageantry assumed to be centuries old and in fact assembled in the nineteenth century for identifiable purposes. In the same year the political scientist **Benedict Anderson** published *Imagined Communities*, arguing that a nation is a community its members imagine into being — none will ever meet more than a fraction of their compatriots, yet each holds a picture of a horizontal fellowship — and that this became thinkable through datable technologies, above all printing in vernacular languages, which let dispersed strangers read the same things at the same time and thereby recognise one another as a public.

If both are right, a source of collective political rightfulness was manufactured in the modern period by people whose names we know, and it worked spectacularly.

The weakest reply — that nationalism is not an anchor because it authorises no particular holdings — is wrong and should be discarded. Nationalism authorises the

most fundamental holding of all, a state's claim to a territory and a population, and does it in exactly the framework's manner.

A stronger reply is that the **material** was not invented: languages spoken for centuries, peasant custom, folk memory, religious identity, landscape, and a documented history that was selected and dramatised rather than fabricated. Hobsbawm's own analysis is that invented traditions typically *attach themselves* to a suitable historic past, which concedes the essential point.

The strongest reply concerns the form the invention was compelled to take. Nationalist movements did not present themselves as creating nations. They presented themselves as **awakening** them — recovery, revival, resurrection, a sleeping people restored to consciousness of what it had always been. That is the vigilance filter operating exactly as Part III describes, and **the fact that the claim was compelled to assert antiquity is itself a confession that antiquity is the load-bearing property.**

But this is a partial save and not a refutation, and the honest version of the thesis is the weaker one:

> *The raw material of an anchor cannot be manufactured. Its **assembly** can be — deliberately, quickly, by known individuals — provided the assembly is presented as recovery, and provided **the assembler is not the beneficiary** of the distribution it authorises.*

That second proviso does real work. The philologists, folklorists, poets and historians who assembled the national traditions were overwhelmingly not the men who would rule the resulting states. The material was assembled by one set of people and used by another, which reproduces in compressed modern form exactly the separation Part III says an anchor requires.

Part V — The interpreter's two jobs

A contradiction in the framework, and the distinction that resolves it.

The architecture assembled so far is tidy, and tidiness in this subject is a warning. Press it at the joint between Part III and Part IV and it comes apart.

Part III said that a position carrying that much structural power is **eventually always captured**. Nothing in the case material contradicts it: rulers fund the interpreters, house them, license them, appoint their head, set their examination, starve them where the funding is terminable and attack their standing by publicity where it is not.

Part IV said the anchor lives in the gap between meaning-holders and weapon-holders, and therefore **dies when the gap closes from either side**.

Together those predict that every anchor is on a short clock and that orders should characteristically die of interpreter capture. The record says otherwise, loudly, in at least three places.

The **Ottoman** religious establishment was about as captured as an interpretive class can be: its senior office, the *şeyhülislam*, appointed and dismissed by the sultan; its scholars salaried; its colleges state-endowed; its ranks administered from the palace. The order ran, in one form or another, for roughly six centuries.

Imperial China is worse for the thesis, because there the ruler did not merely appoint the interpreters but defined the qualification. The interpretive class was constituted by an **examination set by the state**, which is the most completely capturable credential in the taxonomy: the ruler determines the syllabus and the pass list, and therefore determines not only who interprets but what counts as competent interpretation. And imperial China is the longest-running instance in this project's archive.

England after 1534 is a third case at speed. Henry VIII made himself head of the church — capture in its most naked form — and the English order did not dissolve into warlordism; it went on to build the most durable constitutional settlement in Europe.

So one of the two claims is wrong. It is the second, and correcting it produces the distinction the case studies had been circling for years.

The error is that "the interpreter class" names one group of people doing two entirely different jobs, and the two have opposite exposure to capture.

The two jobs

The vertical job is telling the apex no. Refusing a divorce, excommunicating, declaring a war unjust, denying a tax, withholding a coronation, pronouncing a succession invalid. It is the function everyone thinks of when they think of religious authority checking royal power, and it supplies all the dramatic scenes.

The horizontal job is making every armed man's title checkable against one source. A baron's holding, an emir's land grant, a governor's commission and a magnate's immunity all deriving from the same place, so that an attack on any of them registers with all the others as an attack on the ground beneath their own. It is silent, unremarkable, generates no anecdotes, and it is the function on which the settlement of Part II actually depends.

> ***Capture destroys the vertical job almost immediately. It leaves the horizontal job entirely intact.***

The reason is structural. A bought interpreter cannot tell the ruler no, because the ruler holds his living, his rank, his colleagues' promotions and his successor's appointment; the refusal that matters is the one that costs, and a salaried man's refusal costs him rather than the ruler. But a bought interpreter performs the horizontal function perfectly, because that function requires nothing of him except that he continue to be **the single place titles come from**. He need not be brave. He need not be independent. He need not even be respected. **He need only be singular.**

As a formula: *the vertical function requires the interpreter to be independent of the ruler; the horizontal function requires only that he be common to the ruled.* Capture removes the first condition and does not touch the second.

The cases, read again

Ottoman. On the vertical axis the record is nearly empty, and the emptiness is the finding: no Ottoman Canossa, no *şeyhülislam* who denied a sultan and made it stick, no interdict, no sustained institutional refusal. Opinions mattered when they aligned with a court faction — a card in a palace game rather than an independent bench. On the horizontal axis nothing failed: the *timar* system of revenue grants to cavalrymen ran on the proposition that grants derived from one authority within a legal order the jurists maintained, and a grant-holder did not need his jurist to be brave. He needed the ground under his grant to be the same ground under every other holder's.

China. The vertical function is thin in exactly the predicted way. There were remonstrating officials, censors, and scholars who died for objecting — and their

objections were framed as *loyal instruction to a ruler who had departed from the classics*, which is the vocabulary of a servant, not of a bench holding a credential the ruler cannot revoke. Heroic individual refusals; no institutional capacity to compel. Meanwhile office was not inheritable, officials were rotated, service in one's home district was forbidden — so essentially the whole administrative elite held standing from a single source and could not convert it into an independent heritable base. Maximum credential capture, maximum single authorship, longest run in the archive. Those three facts are compatible only if the jobs are separable.

The control case is the Investiture Contest. The distinction would be suspiciously convenient if the vertical function never appeared. It does, and where it appears it has an identifiable cause. Between roughly 1075 and 1122 the papacy and the German emperors fought a constitutional war over who appointed bishops, producing the scene at Canossa in January 1077 where an emperor waited in the snow for absolution. Why did this happen here and not in Istanbul or Beijing? Not because Latin churchmen were braver. Because **the credential lived in a foreign office**: the pope was not appointable, salaried or removable by any individual king, and possessed an income and institutional base no single monarch controlled. The vertical function was live precisely because capture was structurally unavailable to any one claimant.

The point generalises. The head of the Ethiopian church was appointed from Alexandria and sent from Egypt for something close to sixteen centuries — a foreign appointee, structurally uncapturable by any Ethiopian emperor in a way no bishop of a national church has ever been, and Ethiopia accordingly has a record of clerical resistance that national-church orders do not generate. **National churches do not produce Canossas.**

And the extreme case is an interpreter with no floor at all. By the mid-eleventh century the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad had no army, no treasury worth the name, and no capacity to compel anyone. Turkish sultans who had conquered the region by force nonetheless sought investiture from him and kept the office alive for centuries. Vertical: zero. Horizontal: full strength — the investiture is precisely what made a Turkish chieftain's distribution of land among his emirs something other than one nomad warlord's personal favour to another. The emir held from the sultan, the sultan from the caliph, and the caliph from nobody in the contest, so the chain terminated where no competitor could seize it.

And the corollary this project has paid for: **the Abbasid caliphate was destroyed within seventeen years of the one occasion on which it raised an army of its own.** A source of title that acquires a floor becomes a competitor, and a competitor's word is

worth his army. Powerlessness is not the puzzle to be explained away; it is the qualification.

The corrected statement, and the real failure mode

> *The anchor lives in the gap. Closing the gap from the ruler's side destroys the interpreter's capacity to constrain **him** and leaves untouched his capacity to coordinate **them**. An order therefore does not die of a bought priest. **It dies when a second author of title appears.***

That last clause names the actual lethal event, and it is not disloyalty. A magnate whose lands come from a patron rather than from the anchor has only a **conditional** interest in the anchor's integrity: if his patron moves against the settlement, his rational course is to follow, because his title travels with his patron. He is not defecting from the bystander coalition; he was never fully inside it. And every man in his position computes identically, which means the patron does not face the coalition — he brings a piece of it with him.

Rome's legions held title from the civic order and no commander could add to it; after Marius a general could grant land to his veterans, and every subsequent threat to the Republic came through that channel. Medieval Europe ran subinfeudation, with title flowing *through* intermediate lords rather than from a single source, and delivered exactly what the mechanism predicts: weak monarchy, endemic baronial war, and centuries of expensive institutional effort — liege homage, royal courts, the doctrine that all land is held ultimately of the crown — spent restoring single authorship.

The trade nobody refuses

Capturing the interpreters buys a ruler real and immediate goods: no excommunications, no denied taxes, no inconvenient verdicts, no rival institution with an independent income and a claim on his subjects' consciences. It costs him nothing in stability **during his own lifetime**, and the framework can now say why — because the function it destroys is not the function holding the settlement together.

What it costs is the only mechanism that could have restrained his successors. **A ruler who captures his interpreters is not making a mistake; he is making a trade whose bill falls due after his death** — which is the class of trade human institutions are worst at declining, and the reason capture is as universal as Part III says.

Part VI — The distance to the sword

One measurable variable, three capacities, and the qualification that nearly broke it.

If capture is the variable, capture *of what*, and how is it measured before anything is known about outcomes?

The answer is a single question that can be scored from ordinary administrative records — appointments, salaries, endowments, recruitment, titulary — which are typically kept by the **ruler's** establishment rather than the interpreters'. That asymmetry matters and Part XIII returns to it.

> ***Who can revoke the qualification that makes this man's reading authoritative?***

Three positions.

Fused. No separate qualification exists; the claimant is the interpreter. Either there is no distinct interpretive class, or one exists whose authority derives from the same principle that qualifies the rulers, so that in the decisive case the interpreters and the claimants are the same set of people.

Domestic. A separate class with a genuine qualification, issued inside the ruler's system: he appoints its head, sets its examination, funds its colleges, licenses its practitioners.

Foreign. The qualification is issued outside the reach of any domestic claimant, by an office that is not a party to the contest and that no local ruler can confer or withdraw.

Why one variable governs three capacities

A claim that one variable predicts three things is worthless until the three mechanisms are shown to be distinct. They are.

Restraint. To constrain the apex, an interpreter must **survive constraining him**. A refusal that costs nothing is an opinion; a refusal that ends the refuser's career, income and successor's prospects will be made occasionally by heroic individuals and will never become an institutional capacity, because institutions learn. So the question is not whether a class is brave but whether the ruler holds the instrument that punishes bravery. In a fused order the question does not arise. In a domestic one the ruler holds

it by construction — which predicts not silence but a specific signature: **heroic individual refusals and no institutional capacity to compel.** Only where the credential is foreign can a refusal be survived.

Coordination. The horizontal job needs the interpreter to be *singular*, not independent — which is why a thoroughly bought class maintains coordination for centuries. In a fused order the requirement fails structurally: **if the claimant is his own interpreter, there are as many sources of title as there are claimants**, each able to read the anchor as favouring himself, and the anchor cannot arbitrate, because arbitration is exactly the act that requires someone who is not a party. A fused order therefore looks strong while there is one claimant and fails at the first genuinely contested succession. The strength before the test is not an illusion; it is simply not a test.

Repair. When an authority **forks** — two men holding the same qualification, each declaring the other invalid — the failure requires nobody to do anything wrong. Coercive capacity divides without loss, since half an army is still an army; authority cannot, because an authorisation is a statement that something is *uniquely* so, and two sources make it a statement about which source you asked. And force cannot settle it, since seizing an office whose whole value is its non-seizability destroys the thing seized. What repairs a fork is an outside power with a floor, willing to compel the parties into a room, **plus a donation of legitimacy from inside** — one claimant conceding in a form that transmits his standing to the process rather than to a rival. That inside donation requires an **institution with procedural standing not identical to any occupant**: a council, a synod, a college. Which is *corporateness*, not distance. In a fused order there is neither, so **a fork in a fused order is unrepairable in principle**, and the only available resolution is the elimination of one party, which resolves nothing about the anchor.

The modifier: where the audience can check

There is one condition under which the whole variable matters less, and naming it prevents the argument from overreaching.

Credential distance matters *because the audience cannot verify the anchor for itself*. That is the entire premise of Part III. Where the anchor is **publicly verifiable by the people it binds**, the interpreter's independence matters proportionally less, because the audience is the check.

A law recited aloud in a public assembly every summer, in the language the assembly speaks, is verifiable: if the reciter alters it, several hundred men who heard it last year

will notice. A liturgy in a dead language, a genealogy known only to specialists, or a calendar requiring twenty years of training is not verifiable by anyone outside the class.

> ***The more esoteric the anchor, the more the distance to the sword governs everything; the more public it is, the less.*** *Credential distance is a proxy for a check the audience cannot perform itself.*

Three independent instances. The medieval **Icelandic** Commonwealth chose its lawspeaker for fixed terms by the assembly of the very chieftains he was to bind — close to the fused position — and ran three centuries without any executive, because the anchor was the law itself, recited from memory in public, a third each year, in the language everyone spoke. **Venice** ran an anchor that was a randomised electoral procedure performed in public with drawn lots, needed no learned class to interpret it, and has both the least powerful interpretive stratum and one of the longest runs in the archive. And the **Kikuyu** of the central highlands, whose senior elders were simultaneously the parties to the disputes they judged, ran an order for five centuries in which everything relevant — age-set membership, seniority, lineage boundary, a man's standing on the ridge — was checkable by everyone, with no esoteric content at all. **A thin, public, universally legible anchor needs no distant priest.**

The third-party edit, and the vulnerability of procedures

The scale treats distance as a feature of an order. One case shows it as an **instrument**, and the case is worth stating because it exposes a hole.

The supreme religious authority of the Khalkha Mongols was the **Jebtsundamba Khutuktu**, an office filled by reincarnation: on a holder's death a search is conducted by clerics and a child is identified as the same person returned. The first two holders were Mongol princes of the highest nobility and direct descendants of Chinggis Khan. Hold that in view: the supreme religious authority and the supreme dynastic legitimacy **could recur in one person, and had** — which is to say Mongolia was capable of producing, in a single body, a claimant whom both the herdsmen and the princes would have been obliged to obey.

In 1758, following a rebellion whose trigger had been the execution of a brother of the second Jebtsundamba, the Qianlong emperor decreed that all future incarnations were to be found among the population of **Tibet**. Every holder from the third to the eighth was Tibetan.

Consider the instrument. It is not conquest, purge or garrison. It touches neither doctrine nor monasteries nor the office's authority. It changes one administrative

parameter — **the catchment from which the holder may be drawn** — and thereby guarantees permanently that the country's supreme legitimating authority can never again be one of its own dynasts. It generated no army, no payroll and no barracks. It cost a sentence.

Two consequences. **Credential distance can be set by a third party**: Qianlong made the Mongol interpreter foreign by decree, for the same reason Ethiopian emperors *suffered* a church head appointed from Alexandria — foreignness makes an office uncapturable. The difference is that Ethiopia's was a constraint on the ruler and Mongolia's was a weapon aimed at the ruled.

And the hole: **a procedure is unforgeable at the level of the individual and capturable at the level of the rule.** Nobody can arrange to be a reincarnation; but a reincarnation search has a written rule about eligibility, and a rule has an author, and whoever controls the paperwork can amend it. A bloodline has no eligibility rule to edit — you either descend or you do not — which makes it *less* editable than a procedure despite being, in the ordinary sense, the cruder instrument. That qualification belongs in the scale.

One last note on the recursion: by 1911, when the Khalkha nobles broke with Beijing, they raised to the throne the Tibetan whose foreignness had been the previous conqueror's design, and understood themselves to be **restoring a Mongol state**. A hundred and fifty years was sufficient for an imposed constraint to become the furniture of reality and be defended as native by the descendants of the people it was imposed on.

Part VII — The radius

What the variable actually sets, and the precondition it assumes.

An earlier finding of this project was that an anchor is a technology for scaling coordination past the number of people who can watch each other. A small enough group needs none, because mutual observation does the same work; a hierarchy needs one because it is too large for the room.

Credential distance supplies the missing quantity. **It sets the radius.**

Where the credential is fused, the radius is the territory the claimant personally commands — because a source of title lodged in a claimant's own body cannot arbitrate between two such bodies. Whatever lies beyond that boundary is settled by force or not at all.

Where it is domestic, the radius is the state that issues the credential. The Ottoman and Chinese orders coordinated enormous territories and had no instrument whatever for settling relations with neighbouring powers that did not recognise their issuing authority — which is why both ran permanent frontier wars against peers.

Where it is foreign, the radius is the area of credential *recognition*, which can be far larger than any single state and is bounded by belief rather than by capacity.

Two cases that make the fused radius visible

Hawaii is the more valuable, because it separates two things this project had always seen together.

The Hawaiian *kapu* system was an excellent anchor by the four-property test: determinate about rank, unforgeable by any outsider, common knowledge to the point of governing what people ate, enforced by death, and ancient. Mana — a real supernatural force concentrated in high-ranking persons by genealogical proximity to the gods — was managed by a genuine class of *kahuna*, specialists in prayer sequences, ritual action, genealogy and the sacred calendar.

And it was fused, because the anchor sat **in the bodies of the claimants**. Mana was not a doctrine the specialists held and the chiefs obeyed; it was a property of ranked persons, and the highest-ranked were exactly those competing for paramountcy. The chief did not receive his authority from a reading. He *was* the reading, and performed the major temple ceremonies himself.

Now the finding. Hawaiian chiefly tenure ran on **kālaiʻāina**, the carving of the land: on the accession of a new paramount the estates were redistributed among his supporters, practised not only after conquest but traditionally at peaceful accession, on a revocable basis, with land never bought or sold. Which means that chiefly tenure was **possession with a ceremony**. The holding did not survive the grantor's death; it was re-granted every reign by whoever now held the highest mana. The one thing an anchor exists to manufacture — the future tense of a claim, its persistence across the death of the man who conferred it — was exactly what the *kapu* did not manufacture for the armed elite.

So the *kapu* was a **mass-compliance technology of extraordinary quality and not a settlement among armed men at all**. It made extraction cheap and did nothing to solve the bystander problem among chiefs — which is precisely what the record shows: continuous chiefly warfare until Kamehameha unified the archipelago between 1795 and 1810 by conquest with muskets and cannon, that is, by floor rather than by anchor.

> ***Anchor quality and horizontal function are independent.*** *An ancient, unforgeable, universally-held, ferociously enforced anchor can perform no coordination among armed peers whatever, because the horizontal function is not a property of the anchor. It is a property of the relation between an anchor and an interpreter who is not a claimant.*

And the abolition of 1819 follows. Six months before the missionaries landed, Liholiho publicly ate with the high-ranking women in violation of the most visible prohibition in the system, then ordered the temples burned. He did not break the *kapu* as a private man; **he ate as king**, which made the violation a royal act, which made it lawful — the Part II danger executed perfectly, since rule-change does not trigger the coalition. The high priest led the burning himself, not from cowardice but because his credential was issued by the same rank system the king embodied and he had nothing to refuse with. And nothing trembled: the land system, the tribute obligations and the chiefly hierarchy continued essentially unchanged for three decades, because **the ritual system had never been authoring them**.

The Classic Maya show the same radius from the other side. The lowlands between roughly 250 and 900 CE held dozens of independent city-states, never unified, each under a *k'uhul ajaw* — divine lord — whose central functions were ritual. There was a real interpretive class with genuinely esoteric expertise: calendars, the Long Count, hieroglyphic script, astronomical calculation tracking Venus to within minutes across a 584-day cycle.

And the credential was issued inside the dynasty. Writing was a royal prerogative; signed works identify scribes as royal princes and titled nobles. What settles the classification is a detail of titulary: two scribal titles are attested, *aj tz'ihb*, the royal scribe, usually a member of the royal family — and *aj ch'ul hun*, Keeper of the Holy Books, **a title so closely associated with the *ajaw* title that an ajaw always held it simultaneously.** The Maya king was, permanently and by title, the keeper of the sacred books. The interpreter's office was not near the sword; it was worn by it, and not as a usurpation but as a constitutive feature of kingship — which is why no contemporary attacked it as an innovation and why there is no Maya Thomas More.

The field's own history is corroboration. Maya stelae were long believed to depict priests, and it took decipherment to establish that they depict kings. **A discipline that had to be told which one it was looking at is describing a subject in which the two were not distinguishable.**

Predictions land accordingly. No restraint is attested anywhere. No repair mechanism existed — no council of priests with standing across polities. And coordination worked *within* a city-state, where the ajaw was the single author of title for the subordinate lords, and did not exist *between* them, because no k'uhul ajaw held from anybody. Six centuries of continuous ritualised warfare between polities that never consolidated.

Which revises a reading this project once held. Maya fragmentation was not an elite strategy chosen because decentralisation prevented any rival capturing the centre. **It was the maximum radius a fused anchor can reach.** The Maya did not decline to unify; they lacked the instrument with which unification is done, and so did the Hawaiians.

The far end, and its limit

Latin Christendom is the contrasting case and its radius is startling. A bishop in Saxony, a duke in Bavaria, an abbot in Swabia and a free city on the Rhine all held standing deriving ultimately from one source that none of them and no emperor could revoke — single authorship across hundreds of units for centuries. At the outer edge, in 1493–94, two sovereign kingdoms with armies and fleets divided the unexplored world between them along a line drawn under the authority of a man with no army: papal bulls set the original partition, Spain and Portugal renegotiated the meridian bilaterally at Tordesillas in 1494, and a later pope confirmed the revision. The crowns bargained over where the line fell; the office they bargained *under* was one neither could issue and neither could seize.

And the limit is the cleanest confirmation available. **Tordesillas bound exactly the states that recognised the credential and nobody else.** France, England and later the Dutch dismissed it, and after the Reformation removed recognition across half of Europe the instrument was worth nothing to the parties who had left. The radius is the area of recognition — no larger and no smaller.

The precondition the scale assumes

One correction belongs here, because the scale was stated once without it.

The Kikuyu order scores as fused — its senior elders were the interpreters and simultaneously the principals — and it did not fail at a contested succession. It ran five centuries and was killed from outside.

The prediction is not refuted; it is **inapplicable**. "Who can revoke the interpreter's qualification" presupposes that there *is* a qualification and an office to be succeeded to. A headless order has neither. So the scale requires a stated precondition — **it applies to orders that have an apex** — and stating it exposes two questions that had been silently conflated:

Where is the credential issued? — which governs restraint, coordination and repair *within* a hierarchy.

Has authority pooled into a seat at all? — which is prior, governs whether the first question can even be asked, and, as Part X shows, is what determines what a conqueror can do.

They are orthogonal. Buganda, the Classic Maya, Hawaii and the sixth-century Türk khaganate are all fused; Buganda has a seat and the Kikuyu do not. The two variables travel together in the archive only because most of the archive is hierarchies.

Part VIII — The floor is a settlement too

The framework applied to its own foundation.

The framework has been running an anchor that requires analysis against a floor that does not — capacity, quantity, the hard thing underneath. That asymmetry was a mistake and this part removes it.

An army has a bystander problem

Look at what an army actually is: several thousand armed men, each physically capable of refusing, walking away or turning around. No commander can compel them all; he compels a few by means of the rest. So "will the army obey?" is not a question about capacity. **It is a question about what each soldier expects the others to do** — which is exactly the structure of Part I.

Run the bystander logic inside the regiment. A soldier receives an order he dislikes, or an order to fire on the wrong people, or an order from a man he suspects has no right to give it. Refusing alone is fatal: he will be shot, by other soldiers, on the order of other officers. Refusing together is safe and might be triumphant. **So his decision is a forecast about the men beside him**, and every one of them is making the same forecast about him.

Three results follow immediately.

Command is not a possession. It is a coordination equilibrium. A commander does not *hold* his men's obedience; he occupies a position that each expects the others to treat as commanding. He can no more own it than a man at the head of a queue owns the queue.

Mutiny is not indiscipline; it is a coordination success. A mutinous regiment is not descending into warlordism. It is *re-solving* the coordination problem on new terms with a different focal point — which is why mutinies are sudden rather than gradual, and why they crystallise around a public act (the overturned cauldron, the refused parade, the delegation to the colonel). Those are common-knowledge devices, doing exactly what a coronation does.

And the floor is itself an anchored settlement. If cohesion is a coordination problem it needs a coordination solution: a focal point each soldier expects the others to defer to, and which no individual officer can seize, because if he could, his seizing it

would be worth only his present strength inside the regiment, which is small. Every army has one, and the components are standard once you know what to look for: an **oath**, sworn publicly and collectively, which is a common-knowledge machine; a **standard**, a physical object of no military use whose loss is treated as catastrophic, because it is the visible token of the coordination; a **chain of command**, in which authority derives from above so that no link owns what he transmits; a **uniform**, making the coordination visible on every body; and a **paymaster**, whose location settles a question below.

> ***The floor is not the bedrock beneath the settlement. It is a second settlement, nested inside the first, running the same machinery on a shorter horizon — and it can fail in the same ways.***

Which is why an army can evaporate without a battle. Nobody is defeated, no casualties are taken, and the force ceases to exist as a force, because the forecast changed.

The address of obedience

If the floor is a settlement it has an anchor, and anchors differ. The variable is **what a soldier takes his obedience to be owed to**, scoreable from recruitment, pay and the wording of the oath.

Addressed to a man. Recruited by that person or in his name, paid from his hand, and the oath, if any, names him. Maximum reliability against everything except the guard's own interest, and no protection whatever against that.

Addressed to an office. Obedience runs to a rank in a chain — to the holder of a commission, whoever that is. Pay arrives through an apparatus that continues without the commander; the oath names the office or the state. Such a force will follow a piece of paper, because **the paper is a public signal that re-coordinates every soldier's forecast about every other soldier, simultaneously.** The paper confers no power; it moves the expectations that *were* the power.

Addressed to a ground. Obedience runs, in the last analysis, to something neither commander nor state can revise: the faith, the law, the constitution, the Mandate, the nation. Most stable against ordinary shocks, and the only setting that constrains the ruler — because a soldier who obeys the ground can be told by the ground to stop obeying the ruler. That is a protection against tyranny and a standing danger to the man at the top, and they are one fact.

The test, available in principle before outcomes: ask what the force does when the apex orders something the ground forbids. Hesitation, requests for authorisation, or a

split means the address is the ground and the floor is *inside* the wider settlement. Simple compliance means the address is the man or the office and the floor is *outside* it.

Why the letter cancels the command

This answers a puzzle that looks trivial and is not. In 1903 Frederick Lugard destroyed the Sokoto Caliphate and announced that he would appoint every emir in northern Nigeria. He commanded the guns; he did not own the country, and the suggestion that he might is faintly absurd. Suppose a letter had recalled him: same man, same place, same guns, same troops. The near-certain outcome is that the troops obey whoever the letter names.

His force was addressed to an **office** — pay through an apparatus that continued without him, commissions issued in London, an oath naming a Crown. So each soldier reads a public statement that the office is now held by another; each knows every other soldier has read it; each updates his forecast; and at that instant obeying Lugard is suicide and obeying the new man is safe, for all of them at once.

He commanded the violence. He did not own the reason the violence obeyed him.

And the English floor was re-addressed deliberately, by statute, within living memory of a civil war. In 1688 James II held a substantially larger army than William of Orange landed with and it dissolved without a general engagement — a floor evaporating because officers took themselves to serve a ground the king had disqualified himself from. The settlement that followed treated the army as the constitutional problem it had just proved itself to be: the **Bill of Rights of 1689** declared a standing army in peacetime unlawful without the consent of Parliament, and in April 1689 the first **Mutiny Act** made mutiny, desertion and sedition triable by court-martial — passed because troops loyal to James had mutinied and could not be tried, mutiny not being a crime at common law in peacetime England. The decisive feature is the expiry: because a peacetime standing army required parliamentary consent, the Act was written to lapse, and a new one had to be passed **every year**, and was, until 1879; its successors still require periodic renewal today.

That is a statutory **re-addressing of the floor** from the person of a monarch to a chain terminating in a legislature — and one that must be *re-performed on a schedule*, which is a common-knowledge device with a calendar. One honest qualification: the Act lapsed between 1698 and 1701 with no appreciable effect on the crown's military power, and no parliament has ever seriously withheld it. The instrument is partly ceremonial — and the framework's claim about ceremony is precisely that content matters less than visibility.

The guard theorem

If a ground-addressed floor constrains the ruler, every ruler has a standing motive to acquire one that does not. And the record shows this attempted independently across civilisations with no contact, with a recruitment criterion so consistent it can be stated as a rule.

Alexander had some thirty thousand Persian youths trained in Macedonian arms; when his Macedonian veterans mutinied at Opis in 324 BCE his answer was that he had replacements. The Ottoman *devşirme* took Christian boys from Balkan villages, converted them and made them the sultan's slaves, and the original design is the point: Janissaries were forbidden to marry, own property or carry on a trade, and required to live in barracks, **expressly so that they should leave no descendants**. The Mamluks were slave soldiers bought as boys, brought into Egypt without family or connection. Byzantium employed Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons as the Varangian Guard precisely because they had no stake in the factions of the city they guarded. Rome's Praetorians were stationed at the centre and paid by the emperor. In Germany in August 1934 the armed forces' oath was rewritten to name a man personally rather than the constitution.

> ***Recruit from people the existing order does not command.***

Foreigners, slaves, converts, children taken young, men without lineage or property. What is purchased is not courage and not loyalty in the ordinary sense. It is **the absence of an alternative address**. A soldier with kin, land, standing and a place in the cosmology can be reached by that country's anchor. A soldier with none can be reached only by the man who feeds him.

And it works, which is the trouble:

> ***A guard that the anchor cannot turn against you is a guard the anchor cannot turn back.***

The bystander mechanism operates only among parties whose standing comes from the same source. A guard whose standing was deliberately drawn from nowhere is, by construction, **outside the coalition** — so when it moves, nothing assembles against it, because nobody else's title is implicated. The apex has bought immunity from deposition-by-anchor and paid with immunity from everything. The Praetorians made and unmade emperors and in 193 auctioned the empire. The Mamluks, brought in as the sultan's slaves, in 1250 became the sultanate. The Janissaries deposed and murdered a sultan in 1622, deposed another in 1808, and had to be destroyed by artillery.

And there is a clock. The first generation genuinely has nowhere else to stand — that is what the recruitment was for. Then they are in the country; they learn the language, acquire reputations, and at some point the prohibitions are relaxed because they are irksome and the corps has standing to ask. In 1566 Selim II permitted the Janissaries to marry. Sons were enrolled; the corps became hereditary; the ban on trades eroded until many drew army pay while running shops; the *devşirme* became irregular and had effectively ended by around 1638–1648. Within two generations of the permission the corps was a hereditary caste with a veto over sultans — and its first exercise of that veto against a reformer was the deposition and killing of Osman II in 1622, who had proposed to abolish the *devşirme* and open the corps to free-born recruits.

> ***The moment a guard acquires a base it stops being a body with nowhere else to stand and becomes a lineage — and a lineage is a claimant.*** *A personal guard must therefore be continuously re-imported, or it becomes one.*

The Mamluk system is the counter-design that proves the rule by obeying it: rank was not passed to sons, and each generation was bought fresh. That refusal of heritability is why the system lasted as long as it did, and its price was an unending purchase of children.

And the cost of removal measures how completely such a guard escapes the ground. Osman II tried to reform the Janissaries and was murdered. Selim III raised a new-model army and was destroyed by revolt. Mahmud II succeeded only in 1826, by provoking the revolt deliberately, bringing artillery against the barracks and rallying the population of the capital — that is, by assembling **a rival floor and a mass mobilisation** to remove a body of soldiers.

Sole authorship runs downward

One structural note. The prohibitions on the Janissary — no marriage, no property, no trade — are the identical three the Ottoman *kul* system placed on its administrative elite, which is the same design imperial China reached with its ban on inherited office and rotation away from home districts, and which the Mamluks reached by refusing heritable rank.

So the amendment: **sole authorship is not a rule about elites. It is a rule about anyone who holds a weapon or an office**, and its violation inside the army has the same signature and the same generational delay as its violation among the magnates.

Two floors, and the drift

An apex who has understood the above is in an unpleasant position: a ground-addressed army constrains him, a person-addressed guard will eventually own him. So the record shows a third arrangement, reached repeatedly: **run both, and keep them balanced.** Rome ran provincial legions and a Praetorian Guard. The Ottomans ran the *sipahi* cavalry, who held *timar* land-revenue grants and had a base in the provinces, alongside the barracked, cash-paid, propertyless Janissaries. Germany after 1934 ran a regular army and an armed party formation that grew from a bodyguard into field divisions.

The design is sound and it **drifts one way only**. In a crisis the apex uses the force he trusts, which is the one addressed to him, so it grows — and every increment reduces his need for the other, which he then has less reason to fund or favour. The reverse drift has no engine: no apex has a motive to strengthen the force that can be turned against him at the expense of the force that cannot. **The two-floor architecture is not an equilibrium; it is a slope with a ratchet.**

The mercenary, and what belief is for

One case sits below all three settings. A mercenary company's obedience is addressed to **payment** — not to a man exactly, and certainly not to an office or a ground, but to a transaction.

The standard criticism is **Machiavelli's**, written around 1513: mercenaries are disunited, ambitious, undisciplined and faithless, brave among friends and cowardly before enemies, with no reason to die for a wage. He is right about the behaviour and the framework supplies the mechanism he does not. **A contract is enforceable only by a third party**, and mercenaries are hired precisely where no such third party exists. So the obedience is addressed to the employer's continued solvency and will, both observable, neither a ground the soldier cannot compute against. When Carthage could not pay off the army it had used against Rome, that army turned on the city between 241 and 238 BCE in a war that nearly destroyed it — not from wickedness, but because the men had performed the calculation their address permitted.

Which places the three settings on one scale of computability. Addressed to a ground, the soldier does not compute, because the address makes the comparison unthinkable. Addressed to an office, he computes and finds the office will outlast any individual, including him. Addressed to a man or a wage, he computes, finds a single mortal, and the answer is available.

Belief is not an ornament on the floor. It is what stops the men with the weapons from noticing that they are the ones with the weapons.

Part IX — How settlements fail

Four routes, three succession solutions, and what does not count as evidence.

The framework is now complete enough to say how an order comes apart. Four routes, in rough order of how often the record shows them.

Route one: a second author of title appears

The lethal event, stated in Part V. Somebody other than the anchor acquires the power to grant holdings that outlast the grant, and the magnates holding from him have only a conditional interest in the anchor's integrity. This is the commonest failure and the hardest to see while it happens, because it usually arrives disguised as a reward.

The clearest instance in the colonial record is Buganda in 1900. Before that year Ganda chieftaincy was appointive: a succession of kabakas had broken the hereditary clan-heads and replaced them with a service nobility holding office at the king's pleasure, promotable, demotable, and unable to pass position securely to sons. The Kabaka was the sole author of every chief's title, and the kingdom's whole apparatus rested on it — the same solution reached, with no possible contact, by the Ottoman *kul* system, imperial China's rotation rules, and Ethiopia's office-linked *gult*.

The Uganda Agreement of 1900 converted that into freehold. Estates measured in square miles — *mailo* — were granted to the Kabaka, the regents and roughly a thousand chiefs, in the legal form of land *already in possession*, which is the standard grammar of a settlement wishing to look like a recognition. A service nobility became a landed one, holding land the Kabaka had not granted and could not revoke, held ultimately of the Crown.

So the accurate description is not that 1900 preserved the kingdom. **It preserved the robe and moved the authorship.** The Kabaka remained the object of a whole people's conviction and ceased to be the author of any powerful man's holding — which is the Hawaiian configuration produced by administrative act rather than inherited, and it predicts what followed: enormous popular devotion, entirely real, and no settlement underneath it. The kingdom that could fill a road with its people could not survive 1966.

Route two: the anchor forks

Two holders of the same qualification, each declaring the other invalid, with no procedure to decide. Nobody has to do anything wrong. As Part VI set out, force cannot repair it, and repair requires an outside floor plus an inside donation of legitimacy through a corporate institution — which is why a fork in a fused order is unrepairable in principle.

Route three: indeterminacy at succession

The anchor names a lineage and is silent about which member, so the anchor manufactures a **pool of claimants**. Every bloodline order has faced this, and the record's management of it falls into three classes — and the third is one this project had not catalogued until recently.

Eliminate the claimants. Fratricide on accession; confinement of surplus princes for life. Ethiopia imprisoned its princes on a mountain, and the severity of the patch measures the size of the gap; it is also why an order with that defect ran seven centuries.

Select among them by procedure. Election by a defined body, designation, lot, primogeniture. Each converts the pool into a queue at the price of introducing a rule that can be contested or edited.

Dissolve the coalitions that would form behind them. This is Buganda's, and it is not a patch. By Ganda practice **the children of a Kabaka took the clan of their mother**, so no royal clan could form and every clan in the kingdom might in principle mother a king. The princes still existed; what did not exist was any lineage with a stake in a particular prince. A magnate asking whom to back found no kin-interest pointing anywhere — and found instead that his clan's interest lay in the Kabakaship continuing to exist, since any clan might mother the next king.

That is the bystander mechanism running **through kinship rather than through title**: every clan held a live claim on the monarchy's future and none on its present occupant, so an attack on the Kabakaship threatened everyone's ticket and no clan's candidate. It is also, structurally, the *kul* logic applied to the royal family instead of the administration — the Ottomans built an elite that could found no lineages; Buganda built a dynasty that had no clan. And the two ran in the same order at once, one level apart.

And the Türk khaganate is what the absence of any solution looks like. In 552 a chieftain named Bumin, of the Ashina clan, declared himself khagan on the Mongolian steppe; within a generation his family governed from Manchuria towards the Black Sea. The anchor was descent in the Ashina clan holding a mandate from Tengri, the sky —

completely unforgeable, since no conquest could make a man Ashina — and completely indeterminate about the member. There was no interpreter class: Tengrism had no canon and no clergy, so the khagan was his own interpreter and heaven's favour was read off the only available evidence, which was success. Bumin also made his brother ruler of the west at the founding, with his own armies and capital, dividing the floor cleanly and leaving the anchor undivided and shared. In 581 four claimants appeared with no common source to appeal to; by 603 the empire had divided permanently.

Floors divide without loss; anchors do not. And a claim asserted twenty-nine years earlier by men still living cannot coordinate the people who watched it being asserted — which makes elapsed time a component of an anchor rather than a description of it.

Route four: concentration under a distributed floor

A distributed floor's whole enforcing capacity is the ability of the many to outweigh the one, so it fails when private power concentrates. Iceland is the documented failure: a genuine anchor, no executive of any kind, three centuries, and collapse when a few families accumulated enough.

What this project could not previously say is **where the rough equality comes from**. It had been treated as a lucky initial condition that erodes. The Kikuyu case shows it is a **maintenance programme** with at least two identifiable mechanisms.

The first is **rotation**. Authority over the society as a whole was held not by a person but by a whole generation-set, and handed on entire to the next in a ceremony called the *ituīka*, the two great alternating generations exchanging the authority of the country roughly every thirty years. That is not merely a term limit: **power scheduled for surrender on a fixed and publicly known cycle cannot pool into a permanent seat, because everyone alive knows it is coming due**, so a man accumulating a following accumulates it against a clock his followers can also read.

The second is **export**. A lineage that outgrew its ground threw off its surplus outward — younger sons and ambitious men bought or cleared new estates at the forest edge and founded new lineages. **The ridge of ambition led out into forest, not up toward a centre.**

Which converts a static claim into a prediction: a distributed floor should hold as long as its anti-concentration mechanisms run and become unreproducible when they stop. The Kikuyu case supplies the mechanisms and cannot serve as evidence for the prediction, because both mechanisms were stopped from outside at almost the same moment — the frontier closed by a railway and a reserve boundary, the *ituīka* due in

the mid-1920s never held under an administration that would not have permitted it had it understood. The order did not fail; it was killed. Which brings us to the discipline that governs all of this.

What does not count as evidence

An order killed from outside is not a test of its settlement, any more than a demolished building is a test of its foundations. Carthage in 146 BCE tells us nothing about Punic institutions. Most comparative arguments about institutional durability quietly mix conquest with internal failure and thereby measure military history while believing they are measuring constitutions.

The distinction has to be applied case by case and it is what makes some cases usable. The Türk khaganate fractured in 581 and divided formally in 603; the Tang conquered the eastern half in 630 and the western in the 650s. **The internal failure precedes the conquest by decades**, so the first half is evidence and the second is not. Had the sequence run the other way the case would have to be discarded.

Part X — What a conqueror finds

Two hierarchies meet, and the second one's options are already set.

Everything so far concerns an order settling itself over generations. A conquest is the same problem in a hurry, with the additional difficulty that the man who needs the warrant is the most conspicuous possible party to the contest. That makes conquest the framework's hardest case and also its most legible one, because conquerors keep records.

Nobody ever found empty ground

This project runs long openings describing the order standing on the ground before the conquest under study. The practice was adopted for method and produced an unplanned result.

In every case, the order found on the ground was itself a former conquest — not a baseline, not an original condition, but a prior build that had taken. Ganda tradition carries two founding stories, one of a conqueror who came from outside and gathered the clans under a crown, one of a prince connected to the older power to the west, and they agree on what matters: the kingdom **had a beginning**. The Kikuyu order overlaid earlier peoples ridge by ridge across centuries, by purchase, by intermarriage and by war. The Sokoto Caliphate was built by a jihad launched in 1804 and was, by 1903, simply the way the world was.

And the second half of the observation is the one easy to walk past: **in every case there was also an interpreter class and a source of rightfulness people deferred to.** Nobody was found simply living somewhere without one. The variation was in how the reading was organised, never in whether there was one.

Stated loosely that claim is trivial — any order has a history and any history involves somebody displacing somebody. The non-trivial version is narrower: in a body of roughly contemporaneous observations covering hundreds of societies of every scale, **no society was found in which holdings were assigned by present strength alone, with no standard cited and no specialist consulted.** That is falsifiable and it could have come out otherwise, and Part XIII argues that the observers' incentives ran *against* the finding, which makes it more credible rather than less.

The conqueror's move is downstream

Two African cases held almost everything constant and diverged completely, and the divergence is the finding.

Buganda had concentrated: a sacred kingship, a graded administration of appointed chiefs, a capital, engineered roads, a fleet, and a belief that had taken so thoroughly that the floor had withdrawn to the margins. The British arrived into a factional civil war, backed one faction with a machine-gun, left the kingship standing and Christianised it, and then leased the kingdom's own army to conquer its neighbours. **That is a machine, and a machine can be captured.** The result was the cheapest hold in this project's collection.

The Kikuyu had refused to concentrate — and refused actively, by the two mechanisms of Part IX. There was no paramount, no capital, no treasury, no standing army, and nowhere to send an announcement. **That is not a machine and cannot be captured.** The British built a chair, and paid for it in force every year for sixty.

So the general finding: **the conqueror's move is set by the settlement he meets, and the operative variable is not credential distance but whether authority had pooled into a seizable seat.**

What he does to the interpreters

Beneath that sits a near-invariant this project's case work has established across four unconnected conquests — the Arab conquest of Sasanian Persia, the British in Buganda, the Manchu conquest of Ming China, and the Spanish in central Mexico.

Keep the clerks. A tax cannot be assessed by a man who does not know the district; a province cannot be held by an official the population will not recognise. The men who can do these things already exist, trained across generations and embedded in the villages, and to a conqueror counting the cost of rule they are the single most valuable asset the country contains. So the Arabs kept the *dehqan* gentry and ran the fiscal registers in Persian for two generations; the British kept the Kabaka's county chiefs and posted a handful of officials to a kingdom of millions; the Manchus kept the Confucian scholar-gentry, the Ming bureaucracy and the examination system entire; the Spanish kept the Nahua *cacique* nobility as tribute intermediaries.

And do one of a few things to the priests, which is the variable: re-dye the subject's sacred institution and pour new content into it; adopt it; subordinate it; or destroy it — according to how the conqueror's legitimating belief can be made to relate to the subject's.

The pattern has a hard edge that completes it. **Join and be kept; resist and be broken.** Buganda was kept and re-dyed; Bunyoro, which fought instead of joining, was floored and dismembered.

Part XI — The five warrants

Five ways to seat a man, and the one that stops asking.

A conqueror can supply force, and force is adequate to possession and useless for ownership. What he needs is a warrant for the men he seats, and he is the least eligible author in the country. So every seating is an answer to one question — *where do I get a warrant I did not write?* — and the record contains five answers, each identifiable from the paperwork of the installation before anything is known about the ending.

Forged. The conqueror is the sole author: he confers an office that did not exist, on a man whose prior standing in his own society is low or negative.

The Kenyan sequence is the type. The company first took a wealthy frontier elder, Waiyaki wa Hinga, for a paramount chief — a rank that did not exist — and in 1892 he was struck down, arrested and died in custody on the road to the coast. Over that grave the colony raised its actual instrument: **Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu**, disowned by his own lineage, who had attached himself to Waiyaki as a servant, then served the men who killed his master as guide, intelligence agent and leader of punitive columns, and became the only man ever to hold the invented title of paramount chief of the Kikuyu.

The recruitment logic is structural rather than sordid. **A forged chair must be filled by someone the old order does not command**, because a man the old order still holds will answer to it — and the readiest such man is the one it has cast out. *The disowned servant and the imported slave-soldier are the same solution to the same problem at two levels of the machine.*

And the price is exact: **Kinyanjui was obeyed because the British were obeyed.** The warrant had one author, the author was a party to the contest, so it was worth his present strength and had to be renewed in force every year. The *kipande* — the numbered copper container worn by law at the throat of every adult African male from 1919, holding his description, his tribe and his employers' remarks — is that bill made into an object. **It is a portable file**, the externalised memory an order carries because it cannot trust a man to hold himself in place by his own conviction. The tag weighs precisely what a warrant would have carried for nothing.

Imported. The conqueror moves a man who already carries a warrant issued where the conqueror cannot reach. In March 1921 at Cairo the same empire, in the same month and by the same men, seated two sons of the same family — Faisal in Iraq,

Abdullah in Transjordan — on the same Sharifian principle: descent from the Prophet, plus standing earned in the Arab Revolt. One dynasty was machine-gunned in a Baghdad courtyard in 1958; the other is on its throne today.

Which corrects a claim this project once made too broadly. **Placement is not authorship.** Britain moved these men and could not have made them at any price. A warrant the sponsor cannot make is not worth the sponsor's present strength, because it did not come from there — so **forged and imported are different positions and only the first is brittle by construction.**

The honest limit must be stated with the finding. The Transjordan study's own conclusion is that survival ran substantially on the *form of solvency*: a rent is attached to the ground and transfers to whoever takes the wellhead, while **a subsidy is attached to a person the payer chooses**, so seizing Amman meant inheriting a bankruptcy. Iraq additionally carried a point-resource and a fracture no formation could close. Sharifian descent was constant across two brothers with opposite outcomes, so it cannot be the whole cause of either. The pair establishes that an imported warrant is *compatible* with rooting. It does not establish that the warrant caused the survival.

Split. The conqueror takes the authorship of office and deliberately leaves the anchor with the conquered, announcing both in one document because the renunciation is what makes the claim tolerable.

Lugard's address at Sokoto in 1903 is the type and it states the framework aloud. He claimed his title not from Britain but from the men he had defeated: the Fulani under Dan Fodio had conquered the country and taken by conquest the right to rule, to tax and to depose and create kings; they had lost it by defeat; it passed to the British; **therefore every sultan and emir would be appointed by the High Commissioner.** He does not argue the earlier conquest was illegitimate — he argues it was **legitimate enough to have created a transferable title**, because its validity is the only warrant available to him. And in the same address he disclaims what he cannot take: government will not interfere with the Muslim religion, the emirs keep their courts, the mosques are respected. He could not become caliph, acquire Islamic learning, or confer the standing of a scholar.

What the split produced is this paper's cleanest confirmation of Part V. The horizontal function survived intact and improved — every emirate deriving from one place, now more singular than before, administered at roughly one British officer per hundred thousand people against about one per seventy thousand in the south where no such apparatus was inherited. And the vertical function was destroyed. Before 1903 an emir was constrained by the caliph above him, by the scholarly class, by rival lineages and by the standing possibility of revolt. Afterwards, by a Resident who wanted the tax

collected. **The hands that could check an emir fell from five to one, and indirect rule did not preserve the emirate; it made it absolute.**

Rented. The conqueror takes neither and leases both from a sovereign who can repossess them. The Alaouite sultan of Morocco in 1912 was *amir al-mu'minin*, Commander of the Faithful, with sharifian descent, holding office by *bay'a* — an oath drafted by scholars and subscribed by named classes of notables, a contract with stated obligations. France left it standing and ran its administration through his seal.

Renting buys two things: **the robe can be rented rather than woven**, which is cheaper because the belief is already believed; and **the cost column can be rented too**, since defiance of the coloniser presents itself to the ordinary subject as defiance of a sovereign whose obedience is a religious duty — priced by the subject's own community at no charge to the conqueror.

And the exposure is the same fact from the other side: **an order that rents its keystone cannot defend its keystone**, because the instruments of removal destroy the trust the arrangement runs on. By 1950 Mohammed ben Youssef had aligned with the nationalists and begun **withholding his seal** — using the one power the arrangement had left in Moroccan hands against the arrangement. On 20 August 1953 the French deposed and exiled him and installed a cousin. It did not work for a day: the substitute was regarded as a usurper, violence spread, and on 16 November 1955 the sultan returned to enormous crowds, with independence following within months. France had to reinstate the sovereign it had destroyed, **because it had ground away every other point of contestability and had no other collaborator left.**

Note also that the anchor *acted*. An anchor whose consent is required for each act, rather than conferred once, is an anchor that can go on strike — the same move as the Japanese emperor, powerless for two and a half centuries, withdrawing the mandate at the Meiji Restoration.

Titled. The fifth position changes the object. When Japan took Taiwan in 1895 it found a country whose coordination had never pooled into a seizable apex — authority at the level of lineage and market town, and a doubled land tenure in which more than one party held a claim on the same field. It did not forge a chief. **The characteristic first expense of capturing a revenue system is not a tax but a survey**, and a survey is the more intrusive instrument, because a levy touches a man once a year and a register decides what he owns. Japan surveyed, resolved the tenure, compensated the holders it extinguished, and thereby manufactured a class of proprietors whose title came from its own register.

> ***A manufactured proprietor is not brittle in the way a forged chief is, because a title deed requires nobody to believe in the man who holds it.***

Kinyanjui needed deference and could not get it. A landowner does not need deference: his holding is enforced against *things*, by a registry and a court, and it works perfectly well in a population that despises him. And the tightest binding instrument is not land but a government security, since **a bondholder cannot detest a government without detesting his own holdings.**

That is not a solution to the warrant problem. It is an **escape** from it, and it is the one the modern world took: property is the one form of title whose enforcement runs against objects rather than through deference, so it is the one an outsider can issue without needing an interpreter, a lineage or a god. The caution belongs with it. A titled elite is durable and it is not a settlement — it secures holdings and does not coordinate the armed, and an order held together this way runs smoothly until it is asked a question the register cannot answer.

The ordering principle

The positions sort on the distance between the warrant's issuer and the conqueror. At one end the conqueror is the issuer and the warrant is worth his present strength, which is to say it is not a warrant. At the other the issuer is a sovereign he cannot touch and he holds a tenancy. The three between are ways of getting some of the far end's benefit without all its exposure. **And one steps off the line entirely, by changing the subject from persons to things.**

Part XII — The wall around the exit

Carneiro run as an experiment, with a treatment date and surviving minutes.

Part IV named circumscription as one of three conditions that turn raw material into a working anchor: where the defeated can walk away there is nothing to settle. And it named an extension — that where geography supplies no walls, states build them in statute.

That extension has always had an evidentiary problem. Serfdom hardened alongside Muscovite consolidation; the late Roman colonate accompanied a state already strong enough to enforce it. In every such case the binding and the consolidation arrive together, and one cannot tell whether the wall made the hierarchy or the hierarchy built the wall.

The Kikuyu highlands supply the clean version, because the exit was open, then it was closed, and the file survives.

Before, the order is Carneiro's Amazon rather than his Peru. Land was available, the forest frontier was moving, and the institutional expression of that availability is the export mechanism of Part IX: ambitious men who could not be accommodated went and cleared new ground. The order never concentrated and never had to. Five centuries of it.

Then the exit was closed, deliberately, in a sequence of measures each argued for in writing.

A railway was driven six hundred miles inland, finished in 1901, for a strategy that had lapsed before it was completed, leaving a debt that the temperate highlands it climbed through were made to answer. Land was alienated to European settlers, the African population confined to defined reserves, and the direction of surplus ambition simply removed.

A **hut tax** came in 1901 and a **poll tax** in 1910, and the mechanism was the currency: payable in coin, and coin was obtainable by an ordinary Kikuyu only by leaving his land and selling his labour to a European. A self-sufficient cultivator who needed no wages was converted into a man who had to earn cash he could not otherwise use. The colony's own governor stated that taxation was the only possible method of compelling the native to leave his reserve to seek work. Collection was timed to the seasons when settler demand for hands was highest. Breaking a labour contract

was made a criminal offence in 1906. And the asymmetry names whom the instrument was for: the African paid from 1901, the European's first direct tax came in 1913.

Movement was fixed to the body by the **Native Registration Ordinance** of 1915, enforced from 1919. And independent production was forbidden: coffee grew best in the Kikuyu heartland and Africans were barred by law from growing it.

Four features make this an experiment rather than an illustration.

The tax vector is inverted, and the vector is the meaning. A settled order taxes to keep the producer producing on his own ground — it takes a share of the harvest and leaves him the land, because it needs him there and yielding. This colony taxed to pull the producer **off** his ground, because it did not need him on his own land at all. Wherever legal circumscription has been alleged before, the tax pointed the ordinary way and the argument had to be reconstructed. Here the officials wrote the vector down.

A prohibition is a confession of capability. A man is not forbidden to do what he cannot do — and where Kikuyu had planted coffee before the restriction hardened, an agricultural officer had the trees uprooted; when African coffee was grudgingly permitted from the later 1930s and in earnest only after 1954, it was **capped**, the African grower held to a few hundred trees where a settler estate ran to thousands. You do not uproot a useless crop, and you do not cap a man unless you have measured what he would do uncapped.

The counterfactual is next door and its books survive. Uganda had no settler colony to speak of; the British there ran extraction through a native kingdom and African smallholders on their own ground. In 1934 Uganda's exports came to about three and a half million pounds, overwhelmingly African-grown; Kenya's that year came to under two million, of which barely three hundred thousand was African production at all. The settler colony, holding the finest temperate highland in East Africa and every legal advantage its law could confer, exported less than half what smallholder Uganda did. **The closing of the exit cost money the colony could plainly have had, and was preferred anyway**, because what it bought was not revenue but a labour supply with nowhere else to go.

And the costume identifies it. Where the coercion pressed hardest, the dress was most traditional: unpaid labour extracted under the name of *communal labour* and presented as African custom; the resident-labourer contract poured into the outward shape of a real Kikuyu practice of redeemable land-lending, then ratcheted upward year by year until in 1939 the last tenancy rights were stripped. **The more coercive the item, the more traditional the costume it is dressed in**, because a coercion wearing the mask of the people's own custom is cheaper to impose and harder to resent aloud.

What it establishes and what it does not. It establishes that legal circumscription is real, deliberate, and can *precede* rather than follow the hierarchy it enables — the causal direction the serfdom cases cannot supply. It does not establish that the mechanism works identically where a state binds its own long-settled population rather than a conquered one, and that generality remains where it was.

Part XIII — What we can know

The filter, the solvent, the census, and three instruments.

Everything above is drawn from a sample. This part is about the sample, and it is the part on which the standing of the whole apparatus depends.

The filter

The recurrence of the same structures across unconnected civilisations is neither diffusion nor a law of history but **selection**. History sieves foundings by whether they hold together and keeps the few that do. Orders that failed early did not build archives, commission chronicles, train scribes, or leave a version of events. What we call the historical record of state formation is, on this reading, the set of attempts that worked, curated by themselves.

The solvent

In 1943 the American Statistical Research Group at Columbia was asked where to armour bombers. The obvious method was to chart the damage on returning aircraft and armour those areas. The statistician **Abraham Wald** produced a series of memoranda — the surviving one titled, with perfect flatness, *A Method of Estimating Plane Vulnerability Based on Damage of Survivors* — establishing that the method inverts the answer. The aircraft available for inspection were, by definition, the ones that came back; damage concentrated on them marked the places a bomber could be hit and still fly home. **The armour belonged where the returning planes showed no damage, because the aircraft hit there were not in the sample.** (The cinematic version in which Wald corrects a room of generals is a legend with no documentary support. The memoranda are the substance — and it is worth noticing that the survivorship-bias story is itself a story that survived by being pithy.)

Turn it on this project and the consequences are not confined to any one finding.

On the origin argument. "Every anchor was inherited; none was built" is precisely what one observes in a world where sources of title are built constantly and only the successfully-concealed constructions last long enough to be recorded. The two hypotheses are observationally identical here. What can be said either way is narrower: **a**

source of title must either be found, or must succeed completely in appearing to have been.

On the settlement argument. The claim that armed men uphold arrangements because a shared source converts private grievance into public forecast is supported entirely by cases in which they did.

On the recurrence argument. A narrow set of *recorded* options is not a narrow set of *viable* ones.

On credential distance. The credential types visible in the taxonomy may be the ones that produce archives.

The problem does not show that any finding is wrong. It shows that the corpus **cannot distinguish a finding about the world from a finding about the archive**, and a body of work unable to make that distinction is a description rather than a theory.

And the bias is worse than random

There is a sharper version, and it comes from the trade-off between reach and resilience.

Coordination can be concentrated into a seizable apex or diffused across un-seizable parts, and the choice cannot be escaped. Concentration buys reach and capacity at the price of a fatal address: a rival who takes the apex takes the whole apparatus, because the apparatus was built to run from it. Diffusion buys resilience at the price of reach: no rival can take the whole by taking a part, and the society cannot mass, tax or build, and is perpetually out-massed by concentrated neighbours.

Now the turn. **The record is a technology of the apex.** Writing, archives and chronicles require the surplus, the scribes and the bureaucracy that only concentration produces. Diffuse orders were largely oral, left few records of their own, and survive mostly in what concentrated states wrote about them — written as their conquest required them to be seen.

So the bias is not random with respect to this project's subject. **The very property that makes an order resistant to conquest — its refusal of the apex that produces scribes — is the property that guarantees it cannot tell its own story.** Survivorship here is not a lottery weighted toward the lucky. It is a filter weighted against the un-decapitatable, and when such orders do appear in the record they appear in the vocabulary of the power that spent the most to overcome them.

The near-census

One body of evidence is different in kind, and this project has been slow to use it.

The colonial encounter is close to a census of the political orders extant in a given century. It went everywhere, selecting subjects by where the coast and the minerals and the strategic road were rather than by durability or literacy — so orders with no writing, no monuments and no chronicle were surveyed as thoroughly as kingdoms. It recorded *structure* rather than glory, because a district officer needed to know who had to be paid, who could deliver labour, and whose word was obeyed. The observer had an enormous stake in the fact of authority and none in its rightfulness. And it is roughly simultaneous, hundreds of orders described within a few decades in overlapping categories.

And the bias runs along exactly the axis being measured, which must be held in view. The colonial observer was hunting for a chair: with whom do I sign, whom do I depose, whose order will be obeyed if I make him give it. He was scoring political orders on precisely the variable this project cares about.

Two things limit the damage. **The observers' errors run against the finding, not toward it.** An officer looking for a seat and finding none reported an *absence* of government — which is the opposite of the claim that authority and interpreters were everywhere; the Kikuyu case is exactly this, a dense universally-obeyed authority reported as its absence because it had no address. The near-census *under*-reports anchors, so a finding that survives its own instrument is stronger for it. And the same lens erred in the other direction with equal usefulness: John Hanning Speke reached the Kabaka's court in 1862 carrying a theory in which Africa was ungoverned, walked into a disciplined monarchy with a graded administration and a fleet, and credited it to a phantom race of lighter-skinned conquerors — a discredited racial theory, and one whose failure preserves the strain. **Where a European reported a state he could not explain, there was a state; where he reported no authority at all, there was authority he could not locate.**

Three instruments

One: the failures are displaced, not missing. A camp that dissolved left no archive *of its own* — but failures occur next to somebody, and where that somebody is literate the failure is written down in his language and for his purposes. The Chinese dynastic histories document the northern steppe across two millennia, *including the confederations that came apart*, because that was excellent news at the Chinese court and was reported in detail with names and dates. Greco-Roman literature does a

smaller version for Gallic, Germanic, Dacian and Thracian coalitions. And there is a category this project overlooked entirely: **orders that consolidated, generated records, and then failed quickly** — the Latin Empire of Constantinople at fifty-seven years, the crusader states, the Taiping at roughly fourteen, the post-Mongol splinters, the twentieth-century secessions. A short-lived order is a failure with an archive, and there are many.

Two cautions belong inside the instrument. The neighbour's record is hostile and formulaic — a Chinese historian had a standing interest in reporting steppe confederations as inherently unstable, which is precisely the proposition a study of steppe failure would be tempted to draw from him. And only failures adjacent to a literate power are visible at all.

Two: the hostile-witness test. The origin argument's weakness is that it is a search rather than a test: a determined analyst can always find *some* pre-existing material and declare it the source. The remedy is a criterion specified in advance that can go the wrong way:

> ***Did the order's enemies, at the time, attack the source of title as an innovation?***

Enemies are the ideal witnesses: a rival has every incentive to say *he invented this last year* if he did, and to find another line of attack if he did not. Run it and it behaves. Akbar's *maḥẓar* is known almost entirely through ʿAbd al-Qādir Badāʾūnī, an orthodox scholar at Akbar's own court who wrote a bitterly hostile chronicle, concealed it for the emperor's lifetime, and made religious **innovation** his central charge — the hostile witness is our only detailed source, and manufacture is visible precisely where somebody objected. Henry VIII's Supreme Headship was attacked as novelty and More and Fisher were executed in 1535 over exactly that. Diocletian's sacralisation was recognised as new at the time. Against these, the Seljuk emirs disputed many things and never disputed that the caliphate was ancient; William of Normandy's opponents argued about whether Edward had promised him the throne, that is, they argued *inside* the ground. **When an enemy attacks you for violating the source, he has conceded the source. When he attacks you for inventing it, he has not.**

The known failure belongs in the instrument: nationalism was widely attacked as novelty and worked anyway. Either the test holds only inside a settled cosmological frame, or what carried nationalism was the second proviso of Part IV — that the assemblers were not the beneficiaries. A test with a known failure case is still a test; a test with none usually is not.

Three: tabulate. Roughly three dozen worked cases exist in this project and they have never been put in a grid. Anchor type; inherited or minted, and if minted by whom; where the interpreter's credential lived; how the interpreters were funded; whether the floor was centralised, distributed or held externally; what the floor's obedience was addressed to; whether title had a single author throughout and the date of any second author's appearance; the succession rule's determinacy and its patches; and the ending classified as internal failure or external conquest. The value is not statistics — three dozen cases will not support much — but that **empty cells become predictions and inconsistencies become visible.**

The honest limit: coding one's own cases, after the fact, in one's own categories tests internal consistency and nothing else, since the categories were derived from these cases. External validity requires cases the framework has never touched, which is what the first instrument supplies. **The three are one programme, not three options.**

The instrument used once

A programme never begun is a wish, so it is worth recording that the first instrument has been run once, on the Türk khaganate of Part IX — a failure with an archive, known almost entirely through the Chinese dynastic histories, the Byzantine historian Menander Protector for the embassies of around 569–571, and Sogdian material for the administration. The khaganate's own monumental self-legitimation, a stele raised for Taspar Qaghan around 581–584, is written **in Sogdian**, the language of its subject merchant scribes, because Turkic had not yet been reduced to writing. And the only surviving native narrative of the First Khaganate is a set of Old Turkic inscriptions from the 710s and 730s belonging to the *Second* Khaganate — a successor order's account, a century and a half later, structured as golden age, fall and restoration. **The only native witness is written in the grammar of recovery**, which is Part III's finding appearing as a source-critical fact.

Part XIV — Why it recurs

Selection, and the reason nobody learns.

The recurrence question now has two halves, and the framework needs both.

Selection explains what survives to be observed. A position poses a problem; the problem has only so many good solutions; the camps that found none dissolved and left nothing; the record is the residue. That accounts for the sample.

It does not account for the behaviour, and the second half does. **Position narrows not only the menu of good solutions but the field of visible ones.** A conqueror standing over a running kingdom is handed the co-optation solution by his position — govern this cheaply, and the answers are few. What his position never hands him is the *long run* of the choice, because the long run lives in other men's histories, which are not in his field.

And the subject elite is caught in the same narrowness from the other side. The Ganda chief deciding whether to convert and keep his lands, and the Persian noble deciding whether to pay the tax or profess the creed, are each solving a live problem — *how do I keep my position under this new master* — and each solves it the same pragmatic way. Neither can consult the other, because those men are strangers across an ocean and a millennium and their fates are simply not available.

> ***History rhymes because the men who make it cannot see far enough to break the rhyme.***

If the horizon were long enough for every conqueror and every co-opted elite to see all the others, the pattern would dissolve into learned adjustment and there would be nothing to observe. **The pattern is made of the fact that nobody reads the notes.**

Which is also the honest boundary of the whole apparatus. This is a tendency the position breeds, never a law it enforces. Two elites in the same position may choose oppositely, and some peoples do not fold at all but fight — and the framework's own logic says what becomes of them, which is that the kingdom that resists is not co-opted but broken. That the pattern has that hard edge is not a flaw in the observation but its completion.

Part XV — Predictions

Stated so that they can fail.

The apparatus is only worth having if it can be disappointed. Each of the following carries what would count against it.

P1 — Orders die of a second author, not a bought priest. In orders whose interpretive class became state-appointed and state-funded, constraints on the apex should disappear rapidly while coordination among title-holders continues; and the terminal crisis should be traceable to somebody other than the anchor acquiring the power to grant holdings that outlast the grant. *Falsified if* orders characteristically enter warlordism shortly after their clergy is captured, with no second author appearing.

P2 — The domestic signature is heroic individuals and no institutional capacity. Where an interpretive credential is state-issued, one should find celebrated refusals that cost the refuser everything and changed nothing, and no instance of the interpretive body as such compelling a ruler. *Falsified if* a state-credentialled class is found to have compelled its own ruler and made it stick.

P3 — Fused orders fail at the first contested succession and look healthy until then. *Falsified if* they characteristically decay gradually, or survive contested successions at rates comparable to the other positions.

P4 — Radius tracks issuance. The furthest extent at which an order settles a dispute without force should equal the territory the claimant commands when fused, the state that issues the credential when domestic, or the area of recognition when foreign. *Falsified if* fused orders are found adjudicating between polities neither party commanded.

P5 — Recognition, not capacity, bounds a foreign instrument. Where a foreign credential's recognition lapses, its instruments should cease binding precisely among the parties who stopped recognising it and continue binding those who did not.

P6 — Repair requires corporateness independently of distance. Forks should be mendable where a corporate interpretive body with procedural standing exists, including domestically-credentialled ones, and unmendable where the credential is held only in persons.

P7 — Verifiability substitutes for distance. Orders whose anchor is publicly checkable by the people it binds should be markedly less sensitive to credential distance than orders whose anchor is esoteric.

P8 — Procedural credentials are captured at the catchment. Where an outside power moves against an interpreter class whose office is filled by procedure, the intervention should take the form of an edit to the eligibility rule rather than an attack on doctrine or personnel, and should be markedly cheaper than interventions against birth-filled offices.

P9 — Anchor quality and horizontal function are independent. Orders should exist with anchors scoring well on determinacy, unforgeability and common knowledge that nonetheless author no durable elite title, and their signature should be endemic warfare among the armed alongside cheap compliance from the mass.

P10 — Anti-concentration mechanisms are the maintenance programme of a distributed floor. Durable headless orders should possess identifiable institutions preventing authority from pooling — scheduled surrender, mandatory rotation, exit to a frontier, redistributive levelling — and should become unreproducible when those stop, whether the stopping is internal or imposed.

P11 — Leased belief has a fork problem. Where an empire governs by leaving subject hierarchies intact, the arrangement should be available only to populations with a separable, textually-grounded hierarchy, and coercive violence should vary **inversely** with doctrinal distance from the ruling creed. *Falsified if* the doctrinally nearest subject populations are systematically the best treated.

P12 — Forces evaporate rather than degrade. Where a floor's address is disrupted, collapse should be sudden, should occur without proportionate casualties, and should be preceded by a public common-knowledge event rather than a gradual decline in reported morale.

P13 — Recruitment predicts turning. Forces recruited from populations with standing in the order they police should refuse illegitimate orders at a higher rate and seize power at a lower one than forces recruited from foreigners, slaves, converts or the disinherited.

P14 — The guard clock. Where a personal guard is granted marriage, heritable entry, property or trade, its first successful coup against a reforming apex should follow within roughly two generations and should be triggered by an attempt to restore the original prohibitions.

P15 — Two-floor drift is monotonic. In orders running both a ground-addressed army and a person-addressed guard, the guard's share of force and expenditure should rise across successive crises and should not durably reverse.

P16 — Removing a person-addressed guard requires an external floor. The destroying agent should be a separately-raised force, a mass mobilisation, or a foreign power — never the existing apparatus alone.

P17 — Placement is not authorship. Installed rulers carrying a warrant the sponsor could not have issued should survive the sponsor's departure at a markedly higher rate than those whose only warrant is the sponsor's decision — controlling, as the Hashemite pair requires, for resource structure and demography.

P18 — Legal circumscription runs the tax vector backwards. Where a state binds a population to supply labour rather than produce, taxation should be designed to push the producer *off* his ground, visibly in the currency of payment and the timing of collection.

P19 — Coercion wears its most traditional costume where it presses hardest. Within a single order, degree of compulsion and degree of claimed customary origin should correlate positively.

P20 — Contemporary enemies distinguish found grounds from made ones. Orders failing within a founder's lifetime plus one generation should show contemporary hostile criticism attacking *novelty* at a markedly higher rate than orders lasting five generations or more, where it should allege *violation*.

And the architecture as a whole fails if any of these is found: a long-durable order, not conquered from outside, in which armed elites held heritable holdings authored by a source the strongest man among them could and demonstrably did revise at will; a fused order that durably settled disputes between polities none of its claimants commanded, without conquest; a large armed force, over a long period, whose obedience ran solely to a commander replaceable by a document, with none of the apparatus of oath, external paymaster or independently-issued commission; or a contact-era society of substantial size and durability in which holdings were assigned by present strength alone, with no standard cited and no specialist consulted.

Part XVI — Where this is weak

Ten problems, three of which reach the foundations.

The vertical/horizontal distinction may be unfalsifiable in the way it was built to fix. Having defined the horizontal function as the silent maintenance of single authorship, I can attribute its persistence to any order that persisted and its failure to any that failed. It earns its keep only if single authorship is scored from documents without reference to outcome — by asking whether any party other than the anchor issued heritable grants, when, and to whom. That is checkable in principle and has not been done.

Restraint is only half-testable. The evidence that an interpreter constrained a ruler is a record of the refusal, and the party who preserves such records is the interpretive class — which had its own scriptoria *because* its credential was independent. The method detects the vertical function exactly where the predictor is present, using records the predictor produced. The predictor itself is more robust, because appointments, salaries, endowments and titulary sit in *royal* archives and survive even where interpreters left none. So coordination and radius are testable; **the negative half of the restraint claim is not testable at all on any order whose interpreters left no independent record.**

The credential scale is coarse and one boundary is a judgement. Hawaii and the Maya have real interpretive classes and are scored fused on the grounds that the credential was issued by the principle that qualified the rulers. That is defensible and it is a reading; a critic could score both domestic and would owe a different account of their behaviour.

The address of obedience is inferred from behaviour and is not independently observable. Oaths, pay records and recruitment are proxies — and they are the proxies a ruler chooses *in order to produce* the behaviour, which makes them downstream of intention rather than upstream of outcome. If a ruler recruits slaves because he expects rootless men to be loyal, finding that his slaves were loyal confirms his theory, not necessarily this one.

Command-as-coordination is demonstrated only where the mechanism was already installed. The revocation argument works in orders where revocation *is* effective. Where it was not installed, the letter would have done nothing and we would call the result a warlord holding a province — and would not have thought to describe

his command as a settlement. The theory may be describing successful cases and calling their success a law.

Selected cases, selected because they are famous. Praetorians, Janissaries, Mamluks: these are the instances everyone reaches for precisely *because* the guard turned, which is selection on the dependent variable of a crude kind. The generational clock rests on one dated sequence.

The five warrants are post hoc, derived by reading studies already written, with the boundaries drawn where the cases fell. One case per position is not evidence of a position.

Much of the case material was assembled under a different framework, whose questions determined which facts were foregrounded — so several findings here may be re-descriptions of a variable that framework had already sorted for.

And three that reach the foundations.

The recursion claim may be untestable. "No contact-era society lacked an anchor and an interpreter" rests on a negative, and nobody has assembled the near-census systematically for this question. Until somebody does, it rests on the absence of counter-examples in a literature nobody has searched for them.

The convergence may be circular. For a fragmented order, the sacred legitimating apparatus is the very thing that makes it visible — cathedrals, stelae, emblem glyphs, ceremonial plazas are monumental *because* they had to be seen by everyone at once. A fragmented polity running on such an apparatus is one we can find; one that did not is invisible or indistinguishable from a scatter of villages. **"All durable fragmented polities ran on sacred legitimation" may be closer to a statement of what can be found than a finding about the world.** The variable under study is the variable that generates the archive.

And the negative sample is contaminated at construction. To include a failed order in a control group, one must first identify it as *an attempt at settlement that failed* — and that identification uses the framework's own categories. A steppe confederation that dissolved is a failed settlement only on a reading that says it was trying to become one. The best partial answer is to code the negative sample on criteria external to the framework before applying it — years between founding and first fragmentation, whether any transition occurred without armed contest, whether levy continued across a transition, whether two successive rulers came from the same house — all ascertainable from hostile sources without any theory of anchors. Whether that is sufficient independence I do not know, and I would rather leave the problem visible than dress it.

Part XVII — The excluded, and the discipline

Who paid, and why explanation is not defence.

This project requires every study to name the people who were inside an order's coercive reach and outside its settlement — because that is where the violence concentrates, and it is the finding most often missed by an analysis of how armed men stopped fighting each other.

The founding condition is that somebody could not leave

Circumscription is not a background variable here. It is one of three things that turn raw material into a working anchor, and the mechanism is not subtle: where the defeated can disperse, no settlement is needed and none forms. Which means the entire apparatus this paper describes — the coordination among armed peers, the conversion of possession into ownership, the peace this project has spent three dozen studies examining — **rests on a population that had nowhere to go.**

That is uncomfortable where geography supplied the condition. It is worse where it did not, because there the condition was **built**: a colonate binding cultivators and their children to the soil, a serfdom that hardened as a state consolidated, household registers making an unregistered person legally nowhere, a reserve boundary and a tax payable only in coin. **States have repeatedly and deliberately manufactured, in statute, the walls that make subordination cheaper than flight.**

Two outsides

The **internally excluded** are inside the territory and outside the settlement. Mercenaries who could hold no citizen land. Slave soldiery bred to hold power and forbidden to found lineages. Subject populations whose hierarchies were leased rather than enfranchised — governed cheaply and represented nowhere. The heterodox who could not be leased at all, because a fork in the ruler's own creed cannot be granted its own hierarchy without conceding that the ground yields two answers.

The **externally rival** are outside the territory running a competing anchor. Every anchor is inside-facing by construction: it pacifies an inside only by constituting an

outside, and the war it ends within, it relocates to the edge. A settled hierarchy is not a peaceful world; it is a world in which the violence has been moved and rescaled.

The floor is made of people

This paper's Part VIII admired designs for making men into instruments, and the best of them work by removing from those men everything that would let them be anything else. The *devşirme* took children from Balkan villages. The Mamluk system rested on a continuous purchase of boys, and rested on it *by design*, because the refusal of heritability that made it durable required buying new children every generation. Alexander's thirty thousand Persian youths were assembled from a conquered population whose families were not consulted. And the prohibitions described as elegant — no marriage, no property, no trade, no descendants — describe a life deliberately emptied of everything a person might otherwise have, in order that a man might be reliable.

And the guards were destroyed by the logic that made them: the events of June 1826 were the killing of thousands of men in their barracks with artillery, most of them not the political operators of the corps but soldiers and tradesmen who had inherited a position their grandfathers had been taken from their homes to fill.

The wound

The apparatus itself carries what this project calls the wound. **The seam that coordinates a society is the same seam that, captured, commits atrocity at scale.** The machinery that lifts a people above warlordism is not a different machine from the one that organises persecution, deportation and famine — it is the identical machine, and its capacity for the second is proportional to its competence at the first. Headless orders cannot mount a crusade for the same reason they cannot settle a succession. There is no version of this argument in which the good half can be kept and the other discarded.

Legibility is not pardon

To explain why an order enslaved, bound, expelled or burned is not to soften it, and the elegance of a mechanism is not a defence of what the mechanism did. To show that a conquest was efficient is to say something about the conqueror's ingenuity and nothing whatever in his favour — and the finding that the gentlest taking is the most refined technique of taking is not a compliment to it.

This paper has been written in the register of engineering, because that register is clarifying and because vagueness about mechanism has protected more atrocity than it has prevented. The register has a cost and it should be paid once, plainly, outside the vocabulary the rest of the paper uses.

The people who could not leave were not a condition of state formation. They were people who could not leave. The man killed for letting his shadow fall on a chief was not a data point about enforcement. The captives named on the Maya monuments were not evidence of ritual elaboration. The men and women who bought their own freedom in northern Nigeria, in six figures, at prices their owners set, were not an illustration of whose settlement it was. Waiyaki wa Hinga died in chains on a road to the coast. The boy identified in Tibet as the returned incarnation was a child, moved across a continent because an emperor two thousand miles away had decided that a Mongol must never again hold that office. And the several centuries of cheap, stable, well-anchored rule that this project has repeatedly identified as the successful outcome were cheap because somebody was paying, and stable because somebody could not move.

Conclusion

What force cannot do, and what gets built to do it instead.

Force takes. It cannot keep, because keeping is a claim about tomorrow and about other people, and a sword has nothing to say to either. **The part of a holding that force cannot reach is exactly the part that makes it a holding**, and so every armed order that has ever lasted has had to manufacture that part out of something that is not force.

What it manufactures is a shared source of rightfulness that none of the men competing could have made — because a title granted by a competitor is a forecast about that competitor's health, and everyone holding one knows it. The source works not by persuading anyone but by changing what each bystander can predict about the others: an attack on any title becomes an attack on the ground beneath all of them, and a coalition forms that nobody has to lead. **Warlordism was never a failure of restraint. It was a coordination failure among the men who might have punished it, and the anchor is the instrument that solves it.**

Because the source cannot be checked by the people it binds, somebody reads it, and that class exists in every case for reasons that are structural rather than cultural — specialisation divides knowing as well as labour, and a chokepoint appears whether or not anyone intends it. Because the mind that must delegate reads cues rather than substance, and because age passes every cue at once, no new ground can be announced as new: **every new ground in the record is announced as a recovery**, and the material itself was made for something else entirely, by people who were not playing, and picked up later by people who were.

The reader of the ground does two jobs, not one, and they have opposite exposure. Capture destroys his capacity to constrain the ruler and leaves untouched his capacity to coordinate the ruled — which is why servile clergies are compatible with centuries of stability, why national churches do not produce Canossas, and why orders die not when the priest is bought but when a second author of title appears. Where his qualification is issued predicts three things at once and also sets the **radius**: the territory one claimant commands, the state that issues the credential, or the whole area in which the issuing office is recognised, and not one acre further.

And the floor beneath all of it is not bedrock. **An army is a set of armed men each of whom could refuse**, which makes it the same problem one scale down, with its own

anchor, its own oath and standard and chain, and its own way of evaporating without a battle. Which is why a letter can move ten thousand men: it carries no force at all, only a public signal that re-coordinates every soldier's forecast about every other soldier at once. Command is not a possession. **A commander does not own his men's obedience; he occupies a position each of them expects the others to treat as commanding** — and that is why the man who directs the violence is not the owner of the country, and why the suggestion sounds absurd to people whose own floor was re-addressed, by statute, three centuries ago, and is re-performed on a schedule to this day.

Every apex has reached for the same escape and it produces the same result. Recruit men the country does not command — foreigners, slaves, converts, children — and you have a force no priest can excommunicate away from you, and also the one armed body in the realm outside the coalition that punishes seizures. **A guard that the anchor cannot turn against you is a guard the anchor cannot turn back**, and the clock runs from the day it is permitted a wife, a house and a son, because a guard with a base is a lineage and a lineage is a claimant.

A conqueror meets all of this at speed, and finds that his options were decided before he arrived — by whether the country he entered had pooled its authority into a seat. If it had, he redirects, and it is cheap. If it had not, he forges a chair and pays for it in force forever, and the bill hangs in a copper tube at a million throats. Between those he may import a man whose warrant he could never have issued, or take the appointment and leave the god, or lease a sovereign and discover that a tenant who evicts his landlord has nowhere left to live. Or he may stop asking the question altogether, survey the land and sell the bonds, and manufacture an elite whose holdings require nobody's deference — which is not a solution to the problem but an escape from it, and is the one the modern world took.

And the last thing to say is about how much of this we can know.

The record is the residue of a sieve. Orders that failed early left nothing, so a corpus assembled from what survives cannot, by itself, distinguish a fact about the world from a fact about the archive. And the bias is not random: the property that makes an order resistant to conquest is its refusal of the apex that produces scribes, so the record runs **systematically against the very configuration the framework most wants to see**, and reports it in the vocabulary of the power that spent the most to overcome it. What can be done about that is a programme rather than a result — the failures displaced into neighbours' archives, the hostile witness who says whether a ground was new, the three dozen cases that have never once been put in a table.

The apparatus in this paper is offered as a lens laid over the record, tested against the cases and held open to the next one. **A tendency the position breeds, never a law it**

enforces. And if there is one sentence to carry out of it, it is the one the whole thing turns on and that every order in this record eventually rediscovered at its own expense:

> ***Force can take a thing today and cannot make it yours tomorrow — and everything else, the god and the genealogy and the oath and the register, is what men build because that is true.***

A note on sources and scholarship

Every borrowed idea is explained in the text rather than invoked on authority; this note gives the references and the reservations.

On coordination, commitment and common knowledge. James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49:3 (1995), for the argument that rational parties fight wars both would prefer to avoid, and for commitment problems as one mechanism. Barry R. Weingast, "The Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law," *American Political Science Review* 91:2 (1997), for the coordination model of rights-policing and the role of a shared standard in defining transgression; the horizontal application among armed peers, and the further application *inside* an army in Part VIII, are this project's extensions and are flagged as such. Michael Suk-Young Chwe, *Rational Ritual: Culture, Coordination, and Common Knowledge* (2001), for public ritual as a generator of common knowledge rather than a transmitter of content.

On the mind that must trust. The account of humans as obligate social learners draws on the cultural-evolution literature associated with Joseph Henrich. The open-vigilance framework — conditional acceptance filtered on competence, benevolence, consensus, coherence and costly commitment — is Dan Sperber and Hugo Mercier's, in Sperber et al., "Epistemic Vigilance," *Mind and Language* 25:4 (2010), and Mercier's *Not Born Yesterday* (2020).

On the division of labour and of knowing. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), for both the opening argument and the passage in Book V on the narrowing of the understanding by narrow employment. Friedrich Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society," *American Economic Review* 35:4 (1945). Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (1922), for the pseudo-environment, the pictures in our heads, and the official who is in some degree a censor.

On exaptation. Stephen Jay Gould and Elisabeth S. Vrba, "Exaptation — A Missing Term in the Science of Form," *Paleobiology* 8:1 (1982). The feather example is the standard illustration in the subsequent literature; the political parallel is this project's.

On circumscription. Robert L. Carneiro, "A Theory of the Origin of the State," *Science* 169:3947 (1970). Carneiro has been contested since publication and the reservations are stated in Part IV. The extension to **legal** circumscription is the project author's, not Carneiro's, and Part XII is its first instance with a treatment date.

On invented tradition. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (1983); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1983; rev. 1991). Both are used in Part IV as the strongest objection to the argument rather than as support for it.

On headless orders. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer* (1940), and Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, *African Political Systems* (1940), for the acephalous society ordered through the balanced opposition of segmentary lineages; Marshall Sahlins, "The Segmentary Lineage: An Organization of Predatory Expansion," *American Anthropologist* (1961); Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah* (1377), on *asabiyya*; and James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed* (2009), on statelessness as deliberate adaptation. The reach-versus-resilience trade-off and the finding that the record is a technology of the apex are developed in this project's paper *The Headless Order*.

On survivorship. Abraham Wald, "A Method of Estimating Plane Vulnerability Based on Damage of Survivors," Statistical Research Group, Columbia University (1943; reprinted 1980). The anecdote in which Wald corrects a room of officers has no documentary support and is treated as legend.

On mercenaries. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (c. 1513), chapters 12–13, and the *Discourses*. His position is that of an advocate for citizen militia in a specific Florentine quarrel and is contested by historians who note that mercenary armies fought well for centuries when reliably paid; the framework's mechanism is offered as surviving that criticism better than his does. The Carthaginian Mercenary or Truceless War of 241–238 BCE follows the standard record, principally Polybius, and this project's Carthage study.

On the historical cases. Each is treated at length, with its own sourcing and its own reservations, in this project's case studies, to which the reader is referred: Ethiopia and the Solomonic line; the Abbasid caliphate under the Buyids and Seljuks; the Mamluk sultanate and its Cairo caliphs; Akbar's *maḥẓar* of 1579, known principally through ʿAbd al-Qādir Badāʾūnī's hostile chronicle and correctly identified as an attestation rather than a decree; the Investiture Contest and Canossa; the Ottoman *şeyhülislam*, *timar* and *devşirme*, the permission to marry of 1566, the deposition of Osman II in 1622 and the destruction of the corps in June 1826; imperial China's examination system and rotation rules; Hawaii's *kapu*, *mana*, *kālaiʻāina* and the abolition of 1819; the Classic Maya *kʼuhul ajaw* and the *aj chʼul hun* titulary; the First Türk Khaganate of 552–603, known through Chinese, Byzantine and Sogdian sources, with the Bugut inscription in Sogdian and the Old Turkic Orkhon inscriptions belonging to the Second Khaganate; the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu and Qianlong's decree of 1758; Buganda's appointive chieftaincy, matriclan rule and the Uganda Agreement of 1900;

the Kikuyu *mbari*, *githaka*, *riika*, *kiama* and *ituīka*, and the colonial instruments of tax, registration and prohibition; the Sokoto Caliphate and Lugard's address of March 1903; the Cairo Conference of 1921 and the Hashemite pair; the Alaouite sultanate, the *bay'a*, and the deposition and return of Mohammed ben Youssef in 1953–55; Japanese Taiwan's land survey and manufactured proprietors; the Bill of Rights of 1689 and the Mutiny Acts; Iceland's lawspeaker and Venice's electoral lot. Where figures or datings are contested they are given as the sources give them, and the specific reservations recorded in the underlying studies stand.

On the project's own papers. The apparatus consolidated here is developed across *The Manufactured Ground* (the origin volume, left as written), *Above Warlordism*, *The Settlement Protocol*, *The Field of Anchors*, *The Found Ground*, *The Necessary Seam*, *The Exploit*, *The Filter*, *The Headless Order*, *The Clerk and the Priest*, *Position Logic*, *What Cannot Be Halved*, *The Shape of the Sieve*, *The Distance to the Sword*, *No Empty Ground*, *What the Conqueror Cannot Author* and *The Guard That Cannot Be Turned*. This paper supersedes none of them; where its statement differs, the difference is noted in the text so that the advance remains visible as something the evidence forced.

On what is not attempted. This paper makes no claim to original historical research in any of the fields it touches, all of which it enters as a visitor and in each of which it relies on this project's earlier studies and the scholarship they cite. Its contribution is analytical and consolidating: to state the whole apparatus once, in order, from the beginning, with every mechanism resting on the one before it; to record the amendments the evidence has forced; and to set out, at the end, exactly how much of it the surviving record permits anyone to know.